

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

SEPTEMBER ISSUE 2010
100% Australian Content

HANDS-ON!

MAFIA II

It's GTA meets Goodfellas, and it's incredible!

UNVEILED!

DRAGON AGE II

The hit RPG's radical new direction revealed!

FATHER'S DAY GIFT GUIDE

THE BEST GIZMOS AND GEAR FOR DAD!

NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN SCREENS

NEW INFO • EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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BROTHERHOOD

HANDS-ON WITH EZIO'S ROMAN BLOODBATH!

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HOT
UPCOMING
GAMES!

EXPOSED!

METAL GEAR SOLID: RISING

The blade stunner that slices everything!

ESSENTIAL!

PORTAL 2

The brainteaser that will break you!

KICK-OFF!

FESTIVAL OF THE BOOT

Rugby League Live & FIFA 11 exposed!

PLUS

ROCK BAND 3 IN-DEPTH!
WRC THE NEW DIRT?
JAMES BOND FIRST-LOOK!

ISSUE 47 SEPTEMBER 2010
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FIVE THINGS RED DEAD TAUGHT US ABOUT COUGARS AND WOMEN



KaneandLynch.com



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IN STORES SEPTEMBER 16TH



Check the Classification

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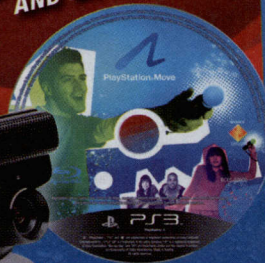


PS3

PlayStation 3

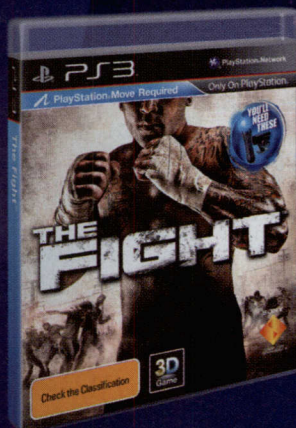
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IN STORES SPRING 2010



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INFOCUS

From the team responsible for the *Hitman* series are these hot new shots of Kane & Lynch 2! Page 14

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Broz n the hood



“We want the player to take the offensive”

PATRICK PLOURDE, LEAD GAME DESIGNER, UBISOFT MONTREAL

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FATHER'S DAY GIFT GUIDE

Stumped on what to buy for your dad? OPS to the rescue. Page 34

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It's a time-bending spectacular that will keep you guessing 'til the very end!



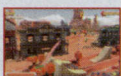
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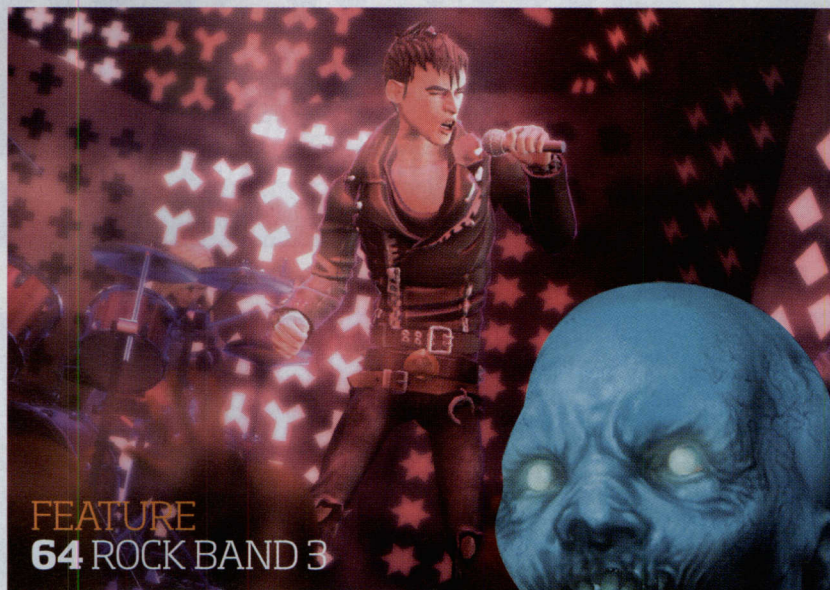
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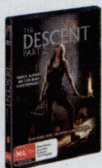
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10x JAMES MAY COLLECTION
20x RICHARD HAMMOND DVDS

Turning
back time in
Mother Russia

SINGULARITY

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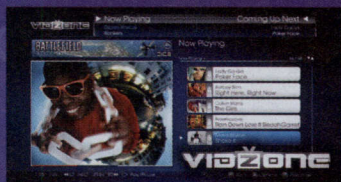
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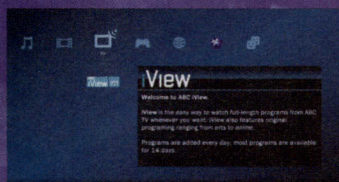
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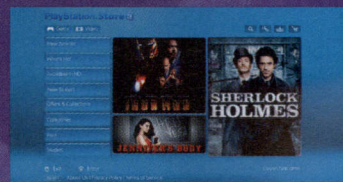
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Official Magazine - Australia

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SHOUT OUTS: KJR :: Vinnie :: Nicole :: Luke Mathew (who just said "Dad") :: Lucy :: MJ :: Mackie Manor :: Dika :: Z-Con



LUKE REILLY
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PSN:

Capt_Flashheart



PLAYING:

RED DEAD

REDEMPTION



WANTING:

DRIVER: SAN

FRANCISCO

WELCOME!

It's been a manly month this one. Partly because we haven't been able to stop playing *Red Dead Redemption* (made easier thanks to the fact there are few other games out anyway), but primarily because Adam's *Medal of Honor* spec-ops beard is sucking all the testosterone out of the office.

It got me thinking, at any rate. Most men probably don't give it a second thought, but we've got it pretty good when it comes to gaming. Formulaic romantic comedies, brooding romantic dramas and stuffy romantic period pieces don't really have gaming equivalents, so we're left mainly with the good

stuff. The good stuff, in this case, is violence.

Guys are simple. The games we like are generally the kind that appeal to our inner 13-year-old child. The one who's been on a high ever since his parents let him stay up to watch *Robocop*. There are plenty of women who are wired the same way, to be sure, but that doesn't disprove our point.

A recent 'Call to Arms' trailer released on the web for the upcoming action blockbuster *The Expendables* - featuring a once-in-a-generation cast of on-screen action legends - tries to rally men to get out of the house and see *The Expendables*. Specifically, in a theatre ("where violence belongs") - lest it lose at the box-office to the Oprah-endorsed sap-fest that will be Julia Roberts' *Eat, Love, Pray*.

Fortunately, gaming is immune from this sort of competition. The next great action game won't have to compete for mindshare with cheap, flash-in-the-pan rubbish (like *Twilight*), or lengthy Academy Award-bait (like anything with Julia Roberts in it).

It just has to be loud, fun and full of the good stuff.

Uke Reilly

OPS ON: MANLIEST GAME EVER



STEPHANIE GOH

ART DIRECTOR

Manliest game? I don't think I'm the best authority on that. I like F1 though. F1 is manly, right? Cars, speed, winning. They're all things guys get off on.

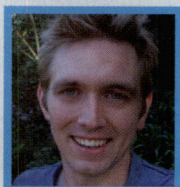
PSN: TBA

PLAYING:

Deathspank

WANTING:

LittleBigPlanet 2



PAUL TAYLOR

DEPUTY EDITOR

Running past someone attractive, holding your gut in and pretending you're not out of breath. That, and seeing who can urinate the furthest.

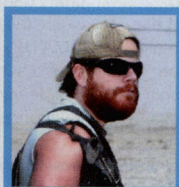
PSN: paulgusta

PLAYING:

Joe Danger

WANTING:

Deus Ex



ADAM MATHEW

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Medal of Honor. Because a protagonist's beard hasn't been that awesome in years. Mine pales in comparison. Mind you, I still have three months left.

PSN: YoumumsAWESOME

PLAYING:

Deathspank

WANTING:

Project S.H.O.O.T. 3



JAMES COTTEE

CONTRIBUTOR

Is this a trick question? Surely *Final Fight*, starring the world's manliest man, Mayor Mike Haggar. Runner Up: *God Hand*, for extreme fistfing action.

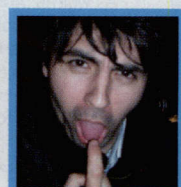
PSN: DrWho3987

PLAYING: Metal Gear

Solid: Peace Walker

WANTING:

Borderlands 2



JAMES ELLIS

CONTRIBUTOR

Doesn't exist. All we've got are cars, guns, explosions. Wanton death. It's so middle of the road. Where are the beard growing mini games, the wood chopping quests?

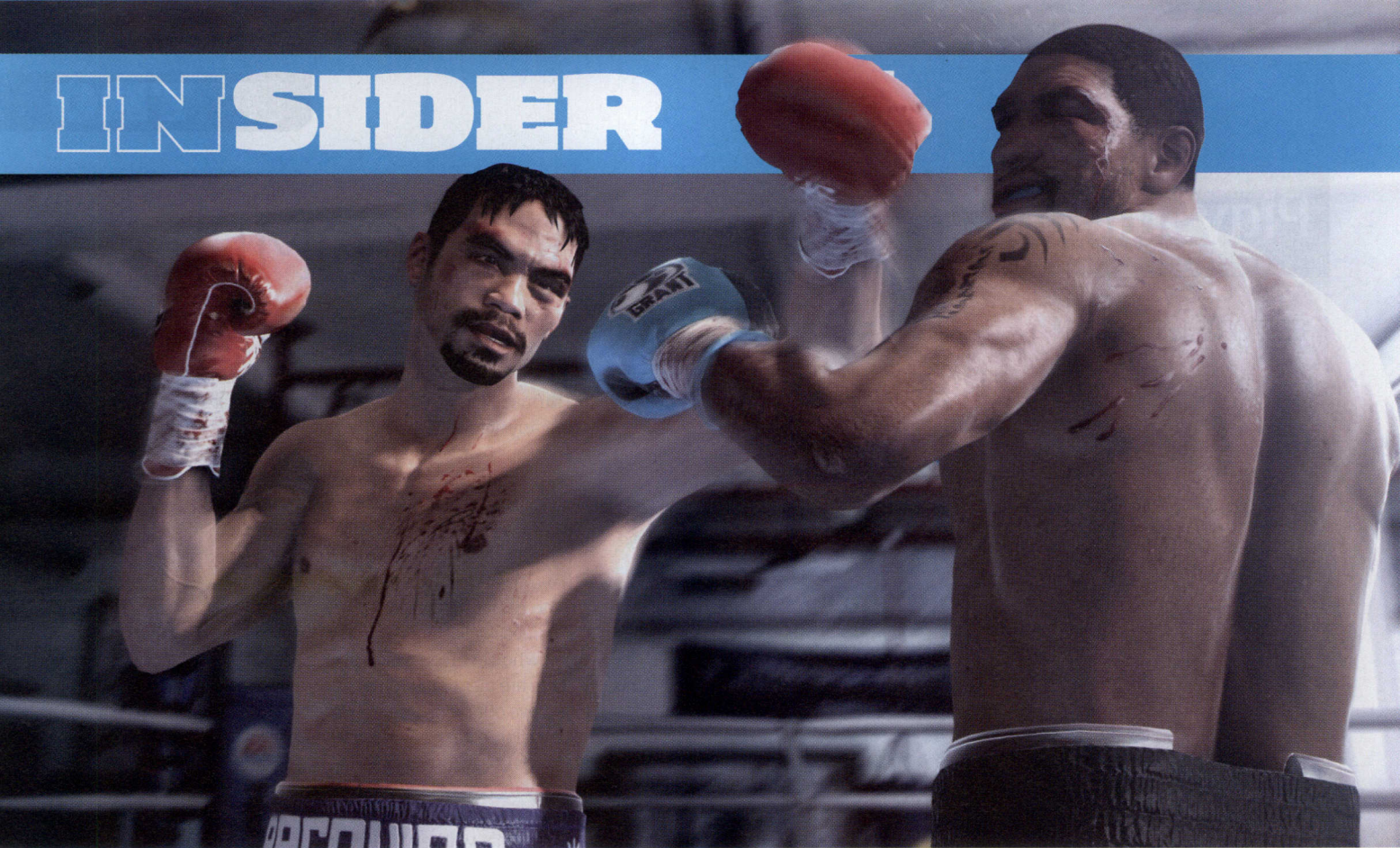
PSN: gtfaster49

PLAYING: Transformers:

War for Cybertron

WANTING:

Gran Turismo 5



SPORT

EA SPORTS: MAKIN' HAY(MAKERS)

Float like a butterfly, sting like a sequel

EA Sports has confirmed that EA Canada is developing the fifth home console version of *Fight Night*, titled *Fight Night Champion*, to be released sometime next year.

As well as promising updated visuals (we'd like sweat that looks like sweat, thanks) expect a tweaked physics-based animation system to make your man dodge dip, duck dive and dodge more realistically, proving that the sport of MMA hasn't delivered a TKO to the sweet science.

Most importantly, and curiously, is a touted all-new control scheme that EA Sports is calling 'Full Spectrum Punch Control' to make your boxer move the way you want him to. The controls in *Fight Night Round 4* felt pretty damn solid to us, so we're interested to see where they'll take this. EA Sports is also releasing a MMA title, called *EA Sports MMA*, later this year whose control scheme will feel very familiar to *Fight Night* fans.

Meanwhile, EA Sports President Peter Moore has conceded that it's "almost impossible" for

annual sports titles, such as *FIFA 11*, to consistently get average review scores of 9 and above, and that constantly hanging out for such high scores puts developers on "a slippery slope," he said when speaking to *Develop*.

"Here in the US *Robin Hood* just came out and it has been ripped apart by the critics, but it made US\$40m in the first weekend. There is a bunch of games that sell millions of units that only [average to good review scores]."

EMBARRASSMENT

SCHAFFER EXTRACTS FOOT FROM MOUTH

During a recent interview with *Eurogamer*, Tim Schaffer called Activision's Bobby Kotick a 'dick' and 'total prick' in relation to Kotick's responsibility to shareholders, rather than his interest in making games.

It's probably out of line, but Schaffer does have an amazing wit when digging himself into a hole. Plus, Activision DID try to sue Double Fine after the developer signed with EA to publish *Brütal Legend* (a game which Activision had already backed out of distributing).

Schaffer, however, realised his mistake and when talking to *gamesindustry.biz*, admitting, "I need to keep my mouth shut. It is shocking how you really can't burn bridges in the industry. You start your own company and you don't have to work for that jerky boss any more. Not naming names. Then it's like *Empire Strikes Back* – you walk in the room and, 'Holy shit Darth Vader's at the table.' It's such a small industry, you see the same people over and over again. No-one ever goes away."





14 IN FOCUS
We go to Shanghai with two scary dudes in *Kano & Lynch 2: Dog Days*.



16 AROUND THE WORLD
IN PS3
We head abroad for all that's odd.



24 ANGRY SACKBOY
He's got the sack to say whatever he wants. Do you?

TECHNOLOGY

THE NEXT BIG THING

Sony Worldwide Studios' Shuhei Yoshida has confirmed that Sony is speaking with its first-party games developers about designing future consoles.

In the past, some developers have criticised the PS3 platform for being harder to program for – the most famous being Valve's Gabe Newell – so in order to make the platform more accessible for game creators to, you know, make games on, Sony has been collaborating with developers so that they can get the most out of the hardware. It's a move spearheaded by the president of Sony Computer Entertainment, Kaz Harai, according to Yoshida in an interview with magazine *Develop*.

"When Ken Kutaragi moved on [from SCE] and Kaz Harai became the president of SCE, the first thing Kaz said was, 'get World Wide Studios in on hardware development'," said Yoshida. "[W]e are undergoing many activities that we haven't yet been talking about in public. Some future platform-related activities."



THE ULTIMATE BATTLE

CAPCOM VS. NAMCO

Two new fighting games are apparently in development. One called *Namco Vs. Capcom* to be made by Namco Bandai's Katsuhiro Harada using the *Tekken 6* engine, and the other called *Capcom Vs. Namco* to be made by *Street Fighter* developer Yoshinori Ono with the *Street Fighter IV* engine.

By the time you read this, the trailer for at least one of the titles will have gone live at Comic-Con in San Diego.

Ono wrote on Twitter "SuperSF4 is nothing compared to what's coming!!" a couple of weeks ago, in relation to the above game.

Which would you buy? Or would you grab both?

IN SHORT...

"Can Joe be a monkey? We like monkeys," was apparently a knock-back Hello Games received when approaching publishers of its excellent side-scrolling motorbike game, *Joe Danger*. Review on page 79.



The ACMI in Melbourne has an exhibition called Screen Worlds, that gives patrons the chance to "play classic and contemporary videogames" as well as look at other parts of digital culture.



Tiger Woods' appears to have hit a bogey in more than his personal life, as sales of *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11* are down 68 per cent in their first month of sales compared to 2010. Will EA stick it out?



WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



Assassin's Creed Brotherhood
Incredible!

Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World
This looks astounding. We want more!

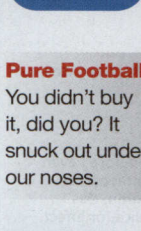


Mafia II
The more we play this, the better it keeps getting.

James Bond
Joss Stone to write a song for this. Ergo, this picture.



July
Man, it's quiet on the shelves in July. A little too quiet...



Pure Football
You didn't buy it, did you? It snuck out under our noses.



An old sausage roll
Most disappointing lunch ever.

FACEPALM

Status updates from the digital elite



Prince of Persia (OLD) Can bend time. Can you?

Today 2:00pm hours ago • Comment • Like



Prince of Persia (NEW) Dude! Can I! Schwwwwiiiiing! I'm bending it, like, right now!

4 hours ago • Report



Renko Yes, though I don't really get why the guy above me sounds just like Devlin...

4 hours ago • Report



Tim Yes but I can edit your comments even before they existed, and I'll...

26 hours ago • Report



TimeShift guy Sure can, but not far enough to stop Renko et al from using the part of my game that was memorable.

4 hours ago • Report



Racedriver Grid guy Yup, but only about 10 seconds into the past to stop me from making mistakes.

3 hours ago • Report



Racedriver Grid guy Yup, but only about 10 seconds into the past to stop me from making mistakes.

3 hours ago • Report



Racedriver Grid guy Yup, but only about 10 seconds into the past to stop me from making mistakes.

3 hours ago • Report



Stephen Hawking This shouldn't be possible...

2 hours ago • Report



Large Hadron Collider Apparently so, Hawking. For a while there we thought Higgs boson from the freakin' future were stopping me from creating this Higgs boson.

2 hours ago • Report



Stephen Hawking Wait, how come you can talk now?

2 hours ago • Report



Large Hadron Collider Err, well... gotta go, past calls! *zap*

2 hours ago • Report



Tim ... do it again, before I even wrote my other comment. Feel free to freak out. Damn, this comment needs italics for effect.

27 hours ago • Report



Prince of Persia (OLD) Shut up shut up shut up! I'm going back in time to change this.

1 hour ago • Report



Prince of Persia (OLD) Can bend time. Can y... awww dammit!

19 hours ago • Report

SCREENTEST

Your favourite games as movies

NAUGHTY BEAR

It's more than you can bear



The Director

John Carpenter

The Plot

Set on Perfection Island, the movie details the life of Naughty Bear. He isn't invited to a party by fellow bear Daddles, even though he brought a present, and he gets upset. He becomes the laughing stock of Chubby and Giggles in the process. With revenge flowing through his stuffing, Naughty makes it his goal to make those that made fun of him pay the ultimate price. With a creepy announcer in his head, set on finding the best puns for every situation, he sets out to take his revenge – in cold fluff.

The Pitch

Take Rambo, add some Arnie-esque one-liners and replace the colourful bears with bears from popular culture! Too easy! Except that, yeah, it'd be a gigantic licensing nightmare. Particularly with all the, you know, *killing*.

Green Light or Development Hell?

You know *Saw*, right? That movie that's all about torturing people? That's what this is but even creepier as a cuddly (but psychotic) bear takes apart other bears limb by limb. Carpenter, master of horror, has had a dry run of late and we trust he'd distill this down to the bare necessities for a good bit of fun. Live-action or CGI? That's the big question.

Best Line:

(Naughty chokes bear to death with his bare (bear?) paws.

Announcer: Stuffocation!

The Cast:

Little Ted – He is Naughty Bear. The Sociopath who is fluff-thirsty.

Big Ted – Plays Daddles, the bear who didn't invite Naughty to the party.

Winnie – as Giggles, the bear that pushes Naughty over the edge.

Yogi Bear – as himself, in a bold but ultimately misguided cameo.

Paddington Bear – appears as Chubby, but clearly isn't into it.

Bear Grylls – Gets dropped onto the island for his show, but finds out that surviving WILL be his toughest challenge yet.

Care Bears – Victims #174, #175, #176, #177, #178, #179 and #180. Uncredited.

“Stuffocation!”

ANNOUCER



NUMBER CRUNCHING

Animals killed by owners of *Red Dead Redemption* over the first two weeks following release:

Wolves 55,813,649

Deer 28,215,951

Cougar 9,292,359

Bear 7,771,916

SEPARATED AT BIRTH!



NO. 19 Madison Paige is a model, idiot – Jacqui Ainsley

This one's cheating, because *Heavy Rain*'s Madison Paige doesn't just look like 29-year-old English model Jacqui Ainsley – she *is* Jacqui Ainsley. Madison's body, face and physical movements were based entirely on Ainsley's. If you want to see how Ainsley looks naked, and you're not Guy Ritchie, and you need to do is boot up *Heavy Rain*. Girl HATES wearing clothes in that game.

TOP 10

GAME COMPOSERS

YOU MIGHT NOT EVEN KNOW YOU ALREADY LIKED

It's easy to be wowed by visuals – they're in your face and tough to ignore. Sometimes, however, it's the music in the background that's painting the real picture. Here are the best at it.

1

MICHAEL GIACCHINO

You could never really have this bloke around for a beer. You'd be boasting about your Employee-of-the-Month gift certificate when he'd bring up his Emmy, multiple Grammys, and his Academy Award. Shortly afterwards the dog would find you dead in the garage with the car running. Between films like *Ratatouille*, *Up* and *The Incredibles* he's scored the original *Call of Duty* and most of the *Medal of Honor* series. Listen to *MOH: Frontline*'s soundtrack. It's epic.



2

**KO OTANI**

A Japanese anime, film and videogame composer, what's most impressive about Ko Otani is that he's basically only done one thing of note. After scoring a whole mess of kookily-named TV shows and movies like *Pumpkin Scissors* and *Graduation Journey: I Came from Japan* he squeezed out the haunting, mournful and downright bloody enchanting score for *Shadow of the Colossus*.

3

**NOBUO UEMATSU**

Regarded as one of the most famous and respected composers in the videogame community, Uematsu is best known for scoring the majority of titles in the *Final Fantasy* series. If it's a bunch of notes strung together in a *Final Fantasy* game, chances are he wrote them. Uematsu, a self-taught musician, began playing the piano at the age of 11 and cites Elton John as his biggest influence.

4

**TOMMY TALLARICO**

Tommy Tallarico entered the video game industry in 1991 and has worked on more than 250 soundtracks. One of these was a simple, chant-style ditty from a middle-of-the-road PSone game (*Evil Dead: Hail to the King*) that HE probably can't even remember, but WE'VE not been able to get out of our head in over a decade. Also? He's Steven Tyler's cousin. This means he's related to Liv Tyler.

5

**HARRY GREGSON-WILLIAMS**

Famous in our circles for his unmistakable and awesome stuff on the *Metal Gear Solid* series, Brit Harry Gregson-Williams also has a hefty Hollywood presence. His work has likely warmed your ears a lot, but you may not have even noticed. The *Shrek* franchise, *Team America*, every Tony Scott film since *Enemy of the State* – you HAVE heard this guy.

6

**JESPER KYD**

Danish-born Jesper Kyd hit it big in 2000 with some hugely well-received work on the original *Hitman*, plus *MDK2* and *Messiah* in the same year. Since then you can add the rest of the *Hitman* series, *Borderlands*, *Freedom Fighters*, *Borderlands* and the *Assassin's Creed* series – amongst others. Kyd started playing piano at an early age and he's mostly self-taught – which makes us feel useless.

7

**GREG EDMONSON**

Greg Edmonson is primarily known for composing the soundtrack to the defunct TV series *Firefly* – an axed show that everyone seems to be a fan of. We know him from his incredible scores in the *Uncharted* series. We won't lie to you but, when we booted up *Uncharted 2* and heard the theme kick in, our trousers rustled. A little. It might have just been a breeze.

8

**HANS ZIMMER**

He's only contributed to gaming on one occasion, but it was *Modern Warfare 2* and it was a doozy. Activision clearly spared no expense getting Zimmer on board to give the theme the Hollywood panache it needed. Considered one of the world's top living geniuses, he's scored *The Dark Knight*, *Black Hawk Down*, *The Lion King*... you know, little stuff. Also? *Cool Runnings*.

9

**BILL ELM & WOODY JACKSON**

RDR boasts over 14 hours of original music, written and performed by US musicians Bill Elm and Woody Jackson. It's brilliant. Composed entirely in A minor, and at 130 beats per minute, it took over 15 months to perfect. Their score, supplemented by the mesmerisingly haunting exclusive tracks (like Ashtar Command's 'Deadman's Gun'), is one of the best soundtracks we've heard.

10

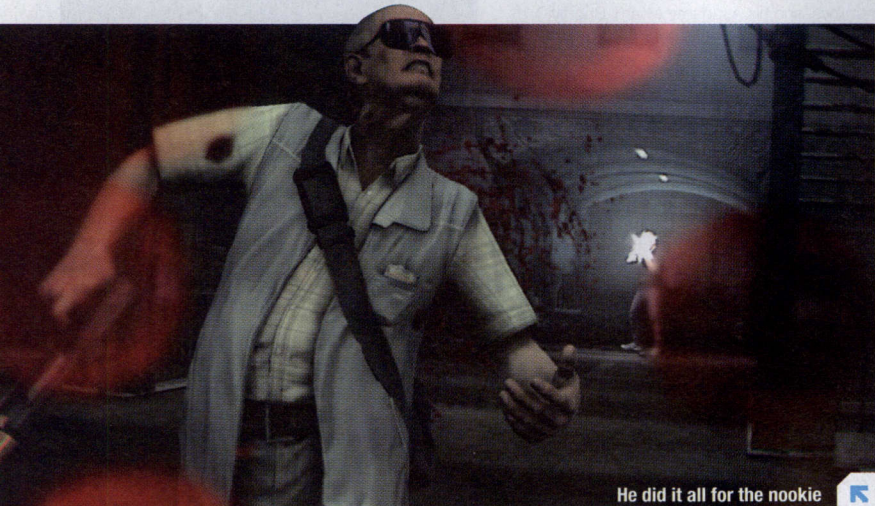
**JOSS STONE**

We'll chuck Joss Stone here as it was the press release about her creating original music for the upcoming *James Bond 007: Blood Stone* that gave us the idea for this top 10 in the first place. We can't say it'll be any good, but she's penned a tune for the game called 'I'll Take It All'. We refuse to believe that not one person involved in this project has connected 'it' as a euphemism for 'penis' yet.

INFOCUS

KANE & LYNCH 2

We're completely in love with *Kane & Lynch 2*'s dark and grimy digital video camera-style presentation. It's a bold risk though.



He did it all for the nookie

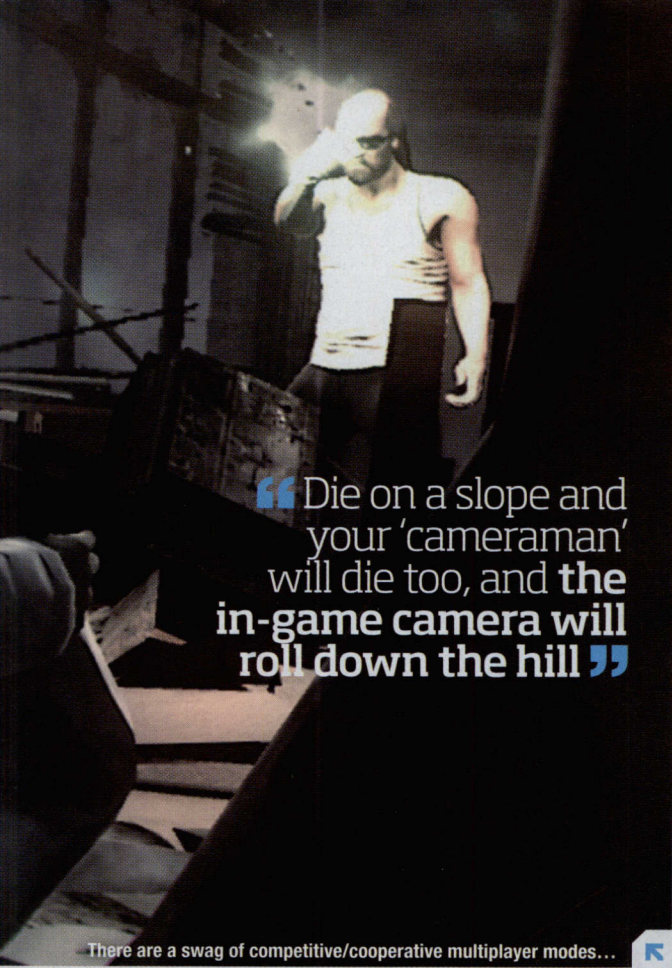


Receding hair, pronounced paunch: Lynch is not your average videogame star



Chesty Bonds (probably wouldn't dig this kind of publicity)





“Die on a slope and your ‘cameraman’ will die too, and **the in-game camera will roll down the hill**”



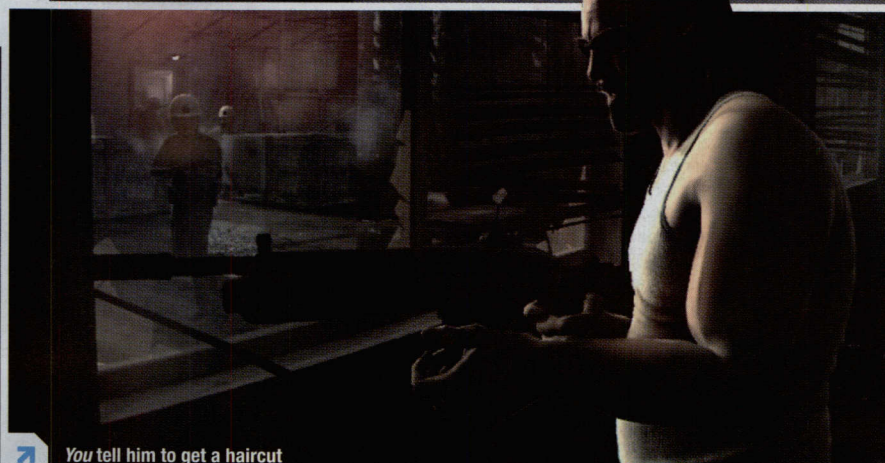
There are a swag of competitive/cooperative multiplayer modes...



...that encourage you to betray your ‘mates’



The action is relentless



You tell him to get a haircut



AROUND THE WORLD **IN PS3**

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming

LONG BEACH, USA
YYYYOINK!

Sometimes you need money to impress a girl, but there are probably better methods than the one used in the following story. 17-year-old Anthony Etienne of West Brighton, Long Island decided that a good way to impress his girlfriend was to snatch a Nintendo DS from a little girl. Perhaps she'll be impressed with his new bad-arse criminal charges: third-degree robbery, fourth-degree larceny and petty larceny charges.

OHIO, USA
BABIES TOY

Cops in suburban Dayton, Ohio are looking for a man who stole two videogame consoles from a Best Buy using the old Use Your Baby As A Bullet Shield tactic, one of the riskiest (and stupidest) plays in the entire robbery and burglary field manual. The guy picked up the two consoles at the BB in Beavercreek and promptly walked out – one console under one arm, baby and console under the other. Only in America, friends.

TORONTO, CANADA
GRAND THEFT ANIMAL

A Bengal tiger named Jonas and two camels named Todd and Sean, have gone missing in eastern Canada after thieves GTA'd the very truck and trailer they happened to be travelling in. The three animals, en route to a location on the outskirts of Toronto, were stolen along with the vehicles after their driver stopped for the night. We just hope that they haven't jacked Mike Tyson's tiger. He really hates that.

HONG KONG, CHINA
USE THE FORCE

LucasFilm recently served a manufacturer of a hand-held laser with a cease-and-desist letter for selling an item it claimed was too close in resemblance to its trademark lightsabers from Star Wars. Now the Hong Kong firm is using the force of eBay to score some revenge. The cease-and-desist letter is being currently being auctioned off and at the time of writing the bidding is up to \$US585, with just over four days to go.

TOKYO, JAPAN
GOTTA LITIGATE 'EM ALL

Last week, The Pokémon Company filed a lawsuit in the US against sports card company Beckett. Beckett publishes *Pokémon Unofficial Collector!* – a magazine that, while unofficial, has been accused of [giving Pokémon free publicity by] reprinting images of Pokémon cards without Nintendo's consent. The lesson here: never assume that the company who has more money than God won't sue you for a little more.

INTERNATIONAL CHARTS



UK

Source: ELSPA

- 1 Red Dead Redemption Rockstar
- 2 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa EA
- 3 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 EA
- 4 Modern Warfare 2 Activision
- 5 Toy Story 3 Disney
- 6 LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 Warner Bros.
- 7 Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands Ubisoft
- 8 God of War III Sony
- 9 Split/Second Disney
- 10 UFC Undisputed 2010 THQ



JAPAN

Source: VGCHARTZ

- 1 Shirokishi Monogatari Sony
- 2 World Soccer Winning Eleven 2010 Konami
- 3 Atelier Totori: Arland no Renkinjutsushi 2 Gust
- 4 BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Arc System Works
- 5 GTA: Episodes from Liberty City Take-Two
- 6 Dead to Rights: Retribution Namco Bandai
- 7 Super Street Fighter IV Capcom
- 8 Just Cause 2 Square Enix
- 9 Lost Planet 2 Capcom
- 10 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa EA



USA

Source: NPD

- 1 Red Dead Redemption Rockstar
- 2 Modern Warfare 2 Activision
- 3 God of War III Sony
- 4 LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 Warner Bros.
- 5 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa EA
- 6 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves Sony
- 7 Assassin's Creed II Ubisoft
- 8 LittleBigPlanet Sony
- 9 God of War Collection Sony
- 10 Transformers: War for Cybertron Activision

ASSASSIN'S CREED BROTHERHOOD



PS3
PlayStation 3



XBOX 360

XBOX
LIVE

PC DVD
ROM



Check the Classification

www.assassinscreed.com

OUT 18.11.10

UBISOFT

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PRE-ORDER PARADISE

The hottest deals, the coolest stuff – what are you waiting for?

DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

Tanner's back. Take to the streets of San Francisco in the hunt for Jericho, your arch villain, in over 100 different cars. Using a unique 'shift' feature, *Driver: San Francisco* promises to be the ultimate car chase game, with the iconic city as your playground for action. Plus, you can replay your chase and turn it into a movie-quality clip by putting the camera where you want it in the Director Mode.

GAME \$129.95

Estimated Dispatch Date: TBA 2011

Special Offer: *Driver* fuzzy dice

EB GAMES \$128

Estimated Dispatch Date: TBA 2011

Collector's Edition includes:

- 1970 Dodge Challenger Hemi R/T replica
- Map of San Francisco
- Two in-game vehicles
- Extra challenge stage



MAFIA II

Prepare to be transported into the dark and unforgiving world of the Mafia. Embellished by era-evoking atmosphere replicates the clothing, cars, music and advertising of 1940s and 1950s Americana, you'll be immersed in the game's cinematic Hollywood-style experience with strong characters in a living, breathing metropolis. It's shaping up to be the most compelling Mafia title to date.

Special Edition includes:

- Collectible SteelBook casing
- Made Man pack
- Hardcover art book
- Mafia II* orchestral soundtrack
- Map of Empire Bay

EB GAMES \$128

Special offer: Vegas Pack DLC

Estimated dispatch date:

27/08/2010

JB HIFI \$129

Special offer: Greaser Pack DLC

Estimated dispatch date:

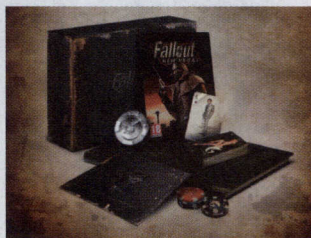
27/08/2010

GAME \$129 (and Mighty Ape New Zealand – DLC only)

Special offer: Renegade Pack DLC

Estimated dispatch date:

27/08/2010



FALLOUT NEW VEGAS

As you battle your way across the heat-blasted Mojave Wasteland, the colossal Hoover Dam, and the neon drenched Vegas Strip, you'll be introduced to a colourful cast of characters, special weapons, mutants and much more.

GAME: \$144

Lightweight leather armour, sturdy caravan shotgun, four repair kits, binoculars

Estimated dispatch date:

31/10/2010

EB GAMES: \$148

Armoured Vault 13 suit, weathered 10mm pistol, Vault 13 canteen, five stimpacks

Estimated dispatch date:

22/10/2010

JB HIFI: \$149

Lightweight metal armour, mercenary grenade rifle, three super stimpacks, three doctor's bags

Estimated dispatch date: TBA



ASSASSIN'S CREED BROTHERHOOD

Ezio, a legendary Master Assassin, must journey into Rome, centre of power, greed and corruption to strike at the heart of his enemy. Defeating the corrupt tyrants entrenched there will require not only strength, but also leadership, as Ezio commands an entire brotherhood who will rally to his side. Also includes a multiplayer mode so you can match your skills against other players online.

Collector's Edition includes:

- Renaissance collector chest
- Map of Rome
- Exclusive codex
- Bonus DVD and game soundtrack
- Multiplayer character cards
- Two exclusive single-player levels DLC
- Unlock two multiplayer characters DLC
- Additional bonus to be discovered

EB GAMES: \$148

Estimated dispatch date:

18/11/2010



BRINK

A man-made floating city called the Ark is on the brink of all-out civil war. Originally built as an experimental self-sufficient and 100% "green" habitat, the Ark has become a refuge for humanity. Crammed with the original founders, their descendants, as well as tens of thousands of refugees, the Ark exists in total isolation from the rest of the world. With 25 years of social unrest, the inhabitants of the Ark have reached their breaking point. It's up to you to decide the future of the Ark and the human race.

GAME: \$89 (web only price)

Estimated dispatch date: TBA 2011

Pre order and receive:

- CARB-9 SMG skins
- Fallout* in-game body tattoo
- Two *Fallout* in-game T-shirts
- Two *Fallout* in-game caps

GUITAR HERO

WARRIORS OF ROCK

LONG LIVE ROCK N ROLL

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PG

Mild themes,
violence, sexual
references and
coarse language



PS3
PlayStation 3

XBOX 360

XBOX
LIVE

Wii

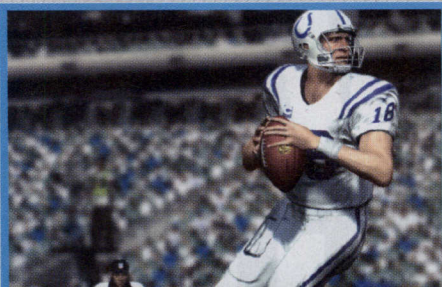
© 2005-2010 Activision Publishing, Inc. Guitar Hero and Activision are registered trademarks of Activision Publishing, Inc. Conditions apply see entry leaflet instore for details. Starts: 9am AEST on 02/8/10 & ends at 11:59pm AEST on 28/9/10. Purchases must be paid in full by 05/10/10 for pre-orders. Limit 1 entry permitted per purchase per person. Retain original pre-order receipt & original purchase receipt(s). Draw: 87 Egerton St, Silverwater NSW 2128 on 05/10/10 at 11am AEDST. Entries divided into groups: NSW/ACT, VIC/TAS, SA, QLD/NT & WA. The first 49 valid entries drawn in each group will each win a double pass - Gold GA (general admission) to a Metallica World Magnetic Tour Concert within their nearest capital city valued at \$320. See conditions for concert locations and dates. Winners' names will be published in The Australian on 12/10/10. Promoter: Activision Blizzard Pty Ltd (ABN 90 054 096 883) of Level 5/51 Rawson St Epping NSW 2121. NSW Permit No. LTPS/10/6345, VIC Permit No. 10/2327, ACT Permit No. TP10/2942, SA Permit No. T10/1594.

THIS MONTH

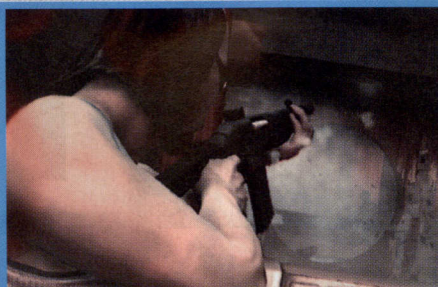
Your 30-day planner of games and goodness!

AUGUST 12
THE EXPENDABLES

Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Willis, Dolph Lundgren, Jason Statham, Jet Li and Mickey Rourke all star in this action event of the decade. Seriously, if every bloke doesn't go to see this film Hollywood might as well stop making films for men. Already in the running at *OPS* Towers for The Best Thing Of 2010.

AUGUST 12 **MADDEN NFL 11**

Set to redefine the way you experience NFL, *Madden's* been made a whole lot simpler, with improved animations and control options and better online functionality. Fans of the franchise should expect the best one yet.

AUGUST 26 **KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS**

A raw and brutal crime shooter, *Dog Days* is set in dank, neon-lit Shanghai where you take control of two of gaming's most disturbed criminals. This is set to deliver a fresh perspective on realism in videogames.

AUGUST 27 **MAFIA II**

You play Vito, born the son of a poor immigrant, trying to live the American Dream during the 1940s and '50s. Looks like an absolute better to us. Check out our hands-on preview on page 47 to read why.

AUGUST 29 **THE CAT EMPIRE**

The Cat Empire bring their eclectic and energetic mix of blues, rock and latin beats to the Hordern Pavilion in Sydney. Get yourself a ticket if you've never seen them before. Call Ticketek on 132 849 for more info.

SEPTEMBER 2 **RUGBY LEAGUE LIVE**

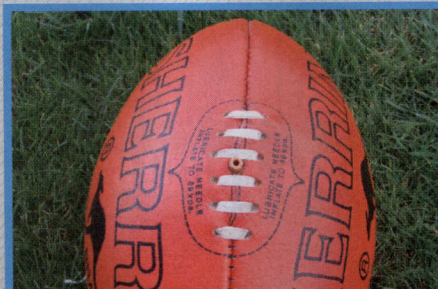
Fans get ready, because it's the first NRL game to come out in ages. Boasting a whole new list of goodies including 40+ licensed teams, four-player multiplayer and online play, we're looking forward to getting our hands on this.

SEPTEMBER 12 **MONZA GP**

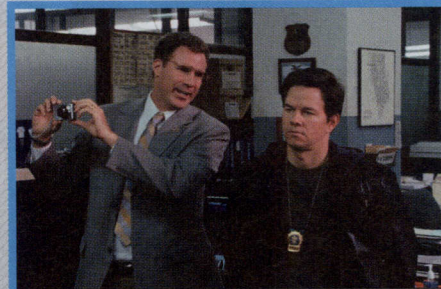
At time of us going to print, Mark Webber is coming third on the driver's championship table and he's well in the hunt to be the first Aussie F1 champion since Alan Jones in 1980. Will this be the race that takes him closer to the top spot?

SEPTEMBER 22 **PARKWAY DRIVE**

Metal band Parkway Drive, from Byron Bay – a favourite of some of our *OPS* Facebook friends – go on stage tonight at Riverstage in Brisbane, followed by other shows around the country. Call Ticketmaster on 136 100 for more info.

SEPTEMBER 25 **AFL GRAND FINAL**

The 114th annual championship game is held today at the MCG in Melbourne. We're quietly tipping the Cats to be there. Feel free to disagree. Finals fever will continue with the NRL grand final on the following weekend.

SEPTEMBER 30 **THE OTHER GUYS**

Mark Wahlberg and Will Ferrell are The Other Guys; the partners nobody wants. They idolise the city's top cops (Dwayne Johnson and Samuel L. Jackson) but when it's their time to step up things don't go quite as they should.

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you!

OUT NOW

SingularityGenre: Shooter
Distributor: Activision**Toy Story 3**Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

AUGUST

Kane & Lynch 2:**Dog Days**
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners**Mafia II**Genre: Action
Distributor: 2K**Madden NFL 11**Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

SEPTEMBER

Rugby League LiveGenre: Sports
Distributor: HES**Test Drive****Unlimited 2**
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners**Formula 1 2010**Genre: Racing
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners**Castlevania:****Lords of Shadow**
Genre: Action
Distributor: Mindscape**Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock**Genre: Music
Distributor: Activision**R.U.S.E.**Genre: RTS
Distributor: Ubisoft**Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions**Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision**H.A.W.X. 2**Genre: Flight
Distributor: Ubisoft**Shaun White Skateboarding**Genre: Sports
Distributor: Ubisoft

OCTOBER

Dead Rising 2Genre: Action
Distributor: THQ**WRC**Genre: Racing
Distributor: AFA**International Cricket 2010**Genre: Sports
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners**F.3.A.R.**Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Warner Bros.**Fallout: New Vegas**Genre: RPG
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners**Splatterhouse**Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners**Medal of Honor**Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA**Vanquish**Genre: Action
Distributor: Sega

NOVEMBER

Call of Duty: Black OpsGenre: Shooter
Distributor: Activision**The Last Guardian**Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Sony**Gran Turismo 5**Genre: Racing
Distributor: Sony**Need For Speed Hot Pursuit**Genre: Racing
Distributor: EA**Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood**Genre: Action
Distributor: Ubisoft**True Crime: Hong Kong**Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision

DECEMBER

Crysis 2Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA

TBA 2010

AFL 10Genre: Sports
Distributor: Sony**DJ Hero 2**Genre: Music
Distributor: Activision**James Bond 007: Blood Stone**Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision**Rock Band 3**Genre: Music
Distributor: EA**EA Sports MMA**Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA**Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II**Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision**SOCOM 4**Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Sony**Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom**Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

TBA 2011

Spec Ops: The LineGenre: Action
Distributor: 2K**L.A. Noire**Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Rockstar**Max Payne 3**Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar**Bulletstorm**Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA**Agent**Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar**inFamous 2**Genre: Action
Distributor: Sony**Deus Ex: Human Revolution**Genre: Action
Distributor: Ubisoft**Driver: San Francisco**Genre: Racing
Distributor: Ubisoft

LOCAL CHARTS

- 
- 1 Red Dead Redemption**
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Rockstar
 - 2 God of War III**
Genre: Action Distributor: Sony
 - 3 UFC 2010 Undisputed**
Genre: Fighting Distributor: THQ
 - 4 FIFA World Cup 2010**
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA
 - 5 ModNation Racers**
Genre: Racing Distributor: Sony
 - 6 Modern Warfare 2**
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision
 - 7 Super Street Fighter IV**
Genre: Fighting Distributor: THQ
 - 8 Skate 3**
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA
 - 9 GTA: Episodes from Liberty City**
Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar
 - 10 Final Fantasy XIII**
Genre: RPG Distributor: Ubisoft

“QUOTE UNQUOTE”

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



“Apparently when they said it was a done deal, they meant there was no deal, and we’re done.”

Tim Schafer, creator of Brütal Legend, reveals that potential for a sequel to his metal masterpiece is nil.



“Why choose PSN? It was the only way we could self-publish. XBLA is kind of a slaughterhouse for smaller developers.”

Hello Games' Sean Murray on why they chose PS3.



“The West is very motivated. The younger generation of Japan is losing.”

Metal Gear Solid big cheese **Hideo Kojima** on the Japanese games industry being outpaced by the West.



“[My job, and my development team's job, and my marketing team's job, is make you not want to trade the game in.”

EA Sports president Peter Moore on the controversial new Online Pass.

OPINION

THE CRAP THAT JACK BUILT

User-generated content. It's one of those exciting concepts earmarked to usher in a new age of video gaming.

Gamers have been making their own content since the time of the dinosaurs, of course. Mad-genius nerds in their basements and/or attics making their own maps and missions for *Quake*, or *Starcraft*, or anything else they could break open. Now every user and his dog can make their own customised characters, levels, maps, cars, houses, enemies and hairstyles. And when you give everyone ultimate creative freedom, it turns out you end up with a congealing mound of intellectual pus.

“Anything I make has already been made more accurately than I could possibly imagine”

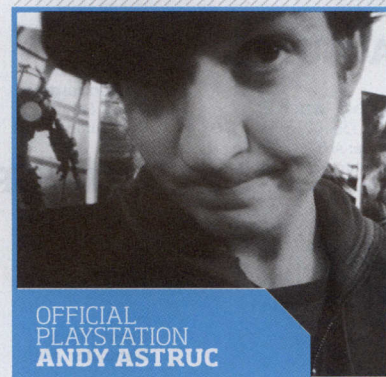
It's probably fair to say that if the people who play games could create fantastic machines or design amazing fashions and architecture at will they wouldn't be sitting around playing video games. Especially not for the bleak and maddening hours it takes

to create your own quality content. A fraction of a percent of the gaming population makes amazing creations that blow your mind, and the rest of us either put together mediocre dreck or embarrassing, smelly puddles of vomit.

Case in point: I was excited about *LittleBigPlanet*. I bought it before I even had a PS3 of my own so that I could sit and stare at it, read it poetry and stand outside its house with a boombox. I started telling everyone I knew to buy it, sometimes with bullet points and pie charts. And eventually I got the chance to actually play.

People have used the versatile and adorable world of *LittleBigPlanet* to create gigantic monsters, calculators, walking deathbots, perfect simulations of classic pop songs, roller-coasters, *Super Mario* homages, around-the-world kart races and levels that play themselves. It took me 45 minutes to make a couch, and when I tried to get Sackboy to sit on it I realised it was too tall and glued to the floor. I attempted to build a car, but ended up with a wildly spinning deathtrap so poorly designed it would murder any player who touched it, before hurtling towards the top of the level and never coming back. To finish up, I spent another hour making a tank track that developed cerebral palsy and spasmed towards the nearest wall before committing ritual suicide.

ModNation Racers has much simpler creation tools to play god with – just paint, stickers and hats. But everyone is still better than me, and anything I make has already been made more accurately than I could



OFFICIAL
PLAYSTATION
ANDY ASTRUC

possibly imagine. I've made a purple guy with wristbands who drives a station wagon. Someone else has made the freaking Scooby Doo Mystery Machine and B.A. Baracus.

So I'm done. You people with your so-called 'talents' can have your user-generated content. You can live in your gold-plated customisable mansions which you built from discarded LEGO, stroking the pet aliens you grew from test tubes. I'll be over here in the corner shooting Nazis, Communists and terrorists. Or aliens. Or I'll be blowing things up. Creation is hard, but at least destruction is universal.

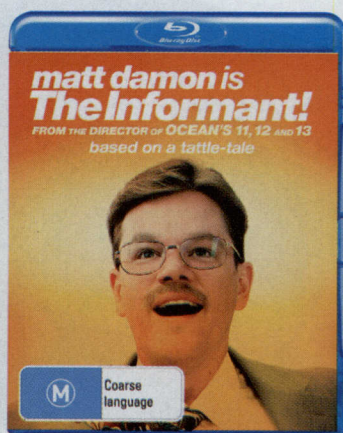
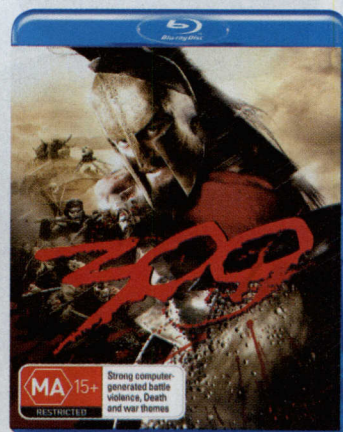
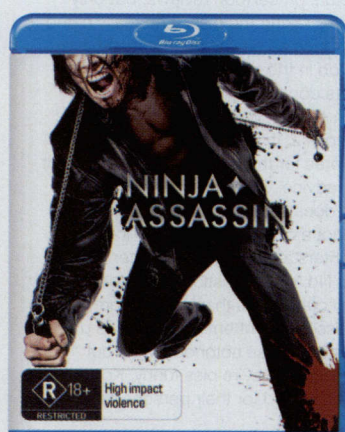
Andy Astruc is a very creative freelance writer based in New Zealand. He could probably design his way out of a paper bag if you gave him a few days.





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OPINION

WHINGERS
SANS FRONTIÈRESOFFICIAL
PLAYSTATION
ANGRY SACKBOY

A lot of critics are panning *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker*, and that's just sad. *Peace Walker* is hands down one of the best games I've played all year.

It has dozens, if not hundreds of hours of challenges, oodles of unlockables, and a difficulty curve that's balanced for pure satisfaction – it's just hard enough to make every achievement feel like a triumph. Play it in co-op, and it gets even better. New tactics, new possibilities; bromance wherever you go.

But a certain class of grumpy old journo will have none of that. They hate it because it's on PSP. They hate it because it's hard. They hate it because it's complex. Above all, they hate it because it takes more than 15 minutes to understand it. Freelancers are usually paid by the word, not by the hour. For the

ones who see gaming as a chore the sort of game that takes time to get into can be their worst nightmare.

For them, the co-op aspect is the worst part.

Because if you're that jaded with gaming, and with life,

then chances are you don't have any friends... let alone friends with PSPs.

You see a lot of this sort of reasoning. Too much of it. Internet humourist Ben 'Yahtzee' Croshaw can get away with it in his *Zero Punctuation* cartoon reviews, but only because he's taking the piss. If he really hated games as much as he lets on, he must have the worst job in the world. All the same, a lot of his points don't really hold water. What's the point in saying *BioShock* isn't as good as *System Shock 2*, if you haven't been able to buy it in stores for the past decade? That's not consumer advice. That's wishful thinking.

Where does this faulty thinking come from? It's not a question of intelligence. Some of these writers are smart; far smarter than you or me. No, it's a question of perspective. They decry cut scenes that drag on forever, yet they miss the point entirely. Fans lap up every minute of those notorious *MGS* cut scenes, because they're piss funny. Kojima's games are as loved for their personality as much as anything.

It's not just that these writers don't love *MGS*; they fail to see how anyone *could* love *MGS*. That's because, at their core, they don't really love anything. Probably not even themselves.

“If you're that jaded with gaming, and with life, then chances are you don't have any friends”

Kojima himself put it best in some recent Twitter posts. He told the world that he was through with baby-sitting young developers who lack passion for what they're doing. For getting things done, and making great games, motivation is far more valuable than mere intelligence. Having passion, motivation, and courage is the secret to doing anything well.

For every man who writes about games for a living, there are a million who would kill to take his place. If you don't enjoy games anymore, then you have nothing in common with your readers – who do. If you have that kind of incredible privilege, and can't get fired up about it, then maybe it's time to crawl into your cardboard box... and never come out.

Angry Sackboy loves games and he's got precious little time for people who don't. He also loves *OPS* – because we love games as much as he does. And we pay him.

Destiny is never left to chance.

Disney SQUARE ENIX

KINGDOM HEARTS Birth by Sleep



ON SALE 9.9.2010



PG

Mild fantasy violence

www.kingdomheartsbbs.com

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SQUARE ENIX

OPINION

NO CONTROLLER FOR OLD MEN



When guitarists first heard of *Guitar Hero* they instinctively turned up their noses and met the product with the following statement: "I play a REAL guitar. *Guitar Hero* is for wannabes who eat their own boogers in secret".

Or something along those lines.

Woah there, Hendrix. Why all the hostility?

Well, it's just human nature. If you've invested eight years of your life decapitating your fingers and grinding them down to

“In your weaker moments you might even arch up and hiss at it like a cat”

boney nubs, fumbling through the tablature for 'Purple People Eater' and issuing F chords that are diarrhoea made audible, you feel like you're entitled to some respect, if not a little awe, when you actually get proficient.

In short, any 'training wheels' experience like *Guitar Hero* or *Rock Band* would seem like an abomination to you. In your weaker moments you might even arch up and hiss at it like a cat.

Imagine your extra dismay then when

EA and MTV announce *Rock Band 3*; a game that goes beyond the super-deformed Mattel guitars and offers every talentless boob out there a fully working guitar and the chance to legitimately change their name to Liquidhand McFretininja.

Rather than feel glad that scores of people are about to learn the beauty of your favourite pastime 'the right way' – or at least, something very close to it – you get scared. You get bitter. You may even get on an Internet forum and type out a screen-long rant that could've been better summarised with the word 'booooo-urns'.

Along with videogames, I've been playing guitar for 15 years and even I caught myself feeling twinges of resentment towards *Rock Band 3*. As a tool of learning, the Pro mode it offers should not only expedite the difficult process of learning guitar, it'll make the learner's progress easier to track and *infinitely* more fun. Pro mode has its own difficulty levels and you can work through the songs at half-speed as you learn them. But whereas kids can now jump in and blitz through 'Crosstown Traffic' without even warming up, I spent my time fumbling through the Rookie Douchebag Blues in F.

F for 'fail', of course.

After much serious thinking (read: drinking) and personal reflection (looking at myself from the bottom of a shotglass) I came to realise that I was unfairly judging the game as one of the 'old guard'. Times change, I need to accept and update with them.

After much more serious thinking and a quick trip to the floor, I then applied the same reasoning to my feelings on casual and motion-based gaming. Suddenly the concept of non-gamers getting a leg-up into current-gen gaming, without earning their thumb calluses (or dying a million times on *Pac-Man*), wasn't quite the sin I once imagined it to be.

As I re-read the notes I made that night – scrawled onto the back of a kebab wrapper with a Keno pencil – I wonder if I was onto something. Did I have a moment of "I'm okay, you're okay" Zen clarity? Or was I just installing a mental airbag for that day when my son teabags me in *Call of Duty 9* and nails 'Freebird' behind his head at his Year 3 talent show?

Adam Mathew has the best band beard this side of ZZ Top and will totally tune your G-string if you asked him. We probably wouldn't recommend it.

SCHOOLS' IN

WANT TO GET INTO GAMES PROGRAMMING / DESIGN?

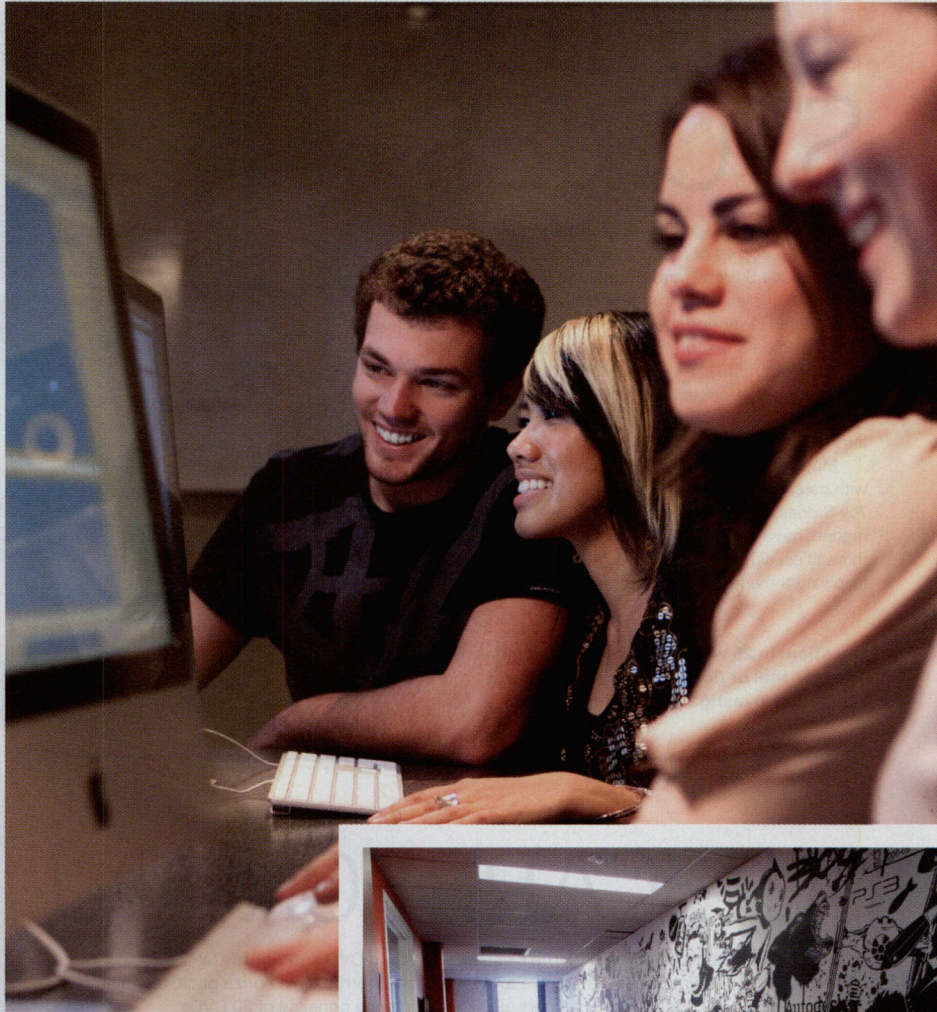
Then you need to talk to the guys at QANTM College; they have been around since 1996 and are one of Australia's most successful and innovative creative digital media educators.

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COMPETITIONS

WRITE IN, SCORE PRIZES!

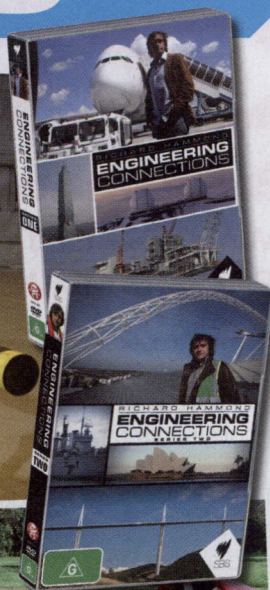
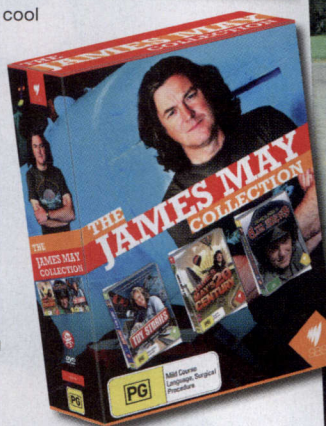
WIN!

TOP TOY STORIES

Thanks to the good people at Madman Entertainment we have 10 copies of Richard Hammond's *Engineering Connections* Series 1 and Series 2 to give away, as well as 10 copies of the rather excellent *James May Collection*. Hammond, best known for doing stupid cool things with cars on *Top Gear*, travels the world to check out mankind's greatest engineering achievements, from the incredible Taipei 101 to Australia's very own Sydney Harbour Bridge, and also getting into the guts of an Airbus A380.

May, also known for doing stupid cool things with cars, has a box set of his three TV series, *Toy Stories*, *20th Century* and *Big Ideas*. 30 lucky readers have the chance to win one of these three titles, simply by answering this question and following the entry instructions below.

Question: In 25 words or less, what engineering marvel – real or fictional – should Richard Hammond investigate next, and why?



James May's Triple Pack (20th Century / Big Ideas / Toy Stories) ©

WIN!

WE SCARE FOR YOU

To celebrate the August 4 release of *The Descent: Part 2* on DVD and Blu-ray OPS has partnered with Icon Entertainment to give away a massive horror-movie prize pack, and also *The Descent: Part 2* on DVD to 15 runners-up. The main prize consists of 20 DVDs:

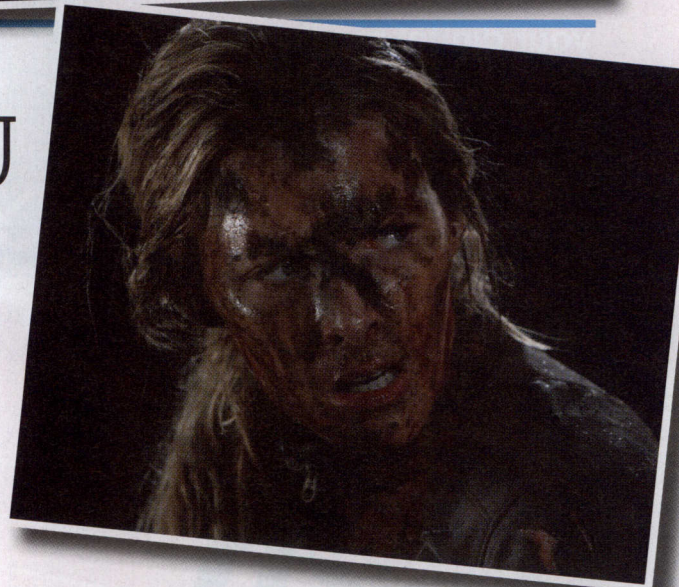
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Blood Trails
100 Feet
Altered

Boogeyman 3
The Broken
Cabin Fever
Cypher
The Descent

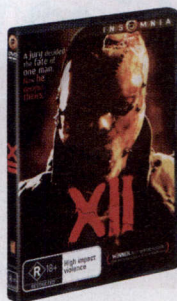
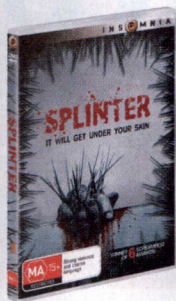
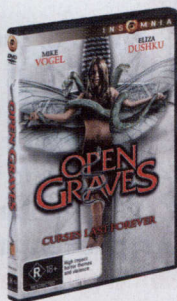
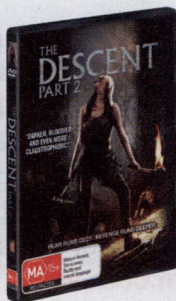
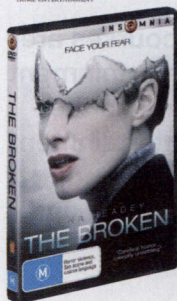
The Hitcher
Messengers 2
Mimic
Open Graves
Shrooms

Solstice
Splinter
Unearthed
Wrong Turn
XII

In *The Descent: Part 2*, Sarah has to go back underground with a rescue team to find her missing friends. As the team moves into the caves, Sarah's the only one that know what terrors await – the Crawlers. They've evolved, and are more deformed and vicious than the last encounter. For your chance to win, simply answer this question and following the entry instructions below.



Question: In 25 words or less, what's the best thing you've ever found (or wish you could find) underground?



HOW TO ENTER

To enter Official PlayStation Magazine competitions email your entries to ops@themediafactory.com.au with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to **OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355**. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 01/10/2010. Winners will be notified by mail.



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Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen: M (Action, violence), Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl (M: Medium level violence, supernatural themes), Star Trek: M (Violence).

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NOT MOVED

HI guys, love the mag and try to get it every month. Just a few observations.

While reading your article on the Playstation Move, I couldn't help but be reminded of the Wii. Holding some wave-aroundable controllers to mimic the actions on-screen: try to tell me it hasn't been done before.

The Wii, also, has a few similarities to an arcade samurai game at my local movies, where you wave around a wand to control the sword strokes. Hell, even the Xbox 360 Kinetic is strikingly similar to EyeToy; a camera taking filming you and letting you become part of the game?

Do companies have no original ideas for new applications for their consoles? "New and Improved", an oxymoron in its own right, doesn't really cut it in today's market. People want something totally new. This almost shameless pilfering of ideas really gets to me, as why would companies want to sell an item that has already been done.

I can imagine the conversation now: "Hey, you heard of the new 'Move', where you wave around sticks and control the character in-game with them?" "Oh, you mean the Wii? That's been around for yonks." This may have something to do with appealing to the 'casual gamer', but already done ideas don't really attract me much.

Last thing: I was reading through the July 2009 issue of the mag, and was browsing through the 'Simply the Best' section, where I came across *Assassin's Creed*, with a Gold Award score of 10.



Looking at this year's July issue, *Assassin's Creed II*, while being "far more compelling than the revolutionary original", with "more to see and do", only got a 9, but still replaced the first one. How a product can, in your view, improve on its original, yet score less, bewilders me.

Anyway, this isn't a flame mail, just more of an "observation report" if you will. Keep up the great work guys.

Cathy O'Neill, via email

Cheers Cathy, thanks for reading.

Our thoughts on the Move are less cynical than yours, but we do see where you're coming from.

Thing is, the major players in gaming industry are in a race to out-innovate and

out-perform each other. There do come times, however, when you need to move at the speed of the consumer. Motion-control isn't 'new', but it has traction. Improving something popular isn't really a bad thing.

As for scores: we don't rate on precedent, we rate according to the scoring criteria you can see on our reviews intro page. Applied in 2007, they resulted in a 10 for *Assassin's Creed*. Applied in 2009 they resulted in a 9 for *Assassin's Creed II*. *Assassin's Creed II* is a better game, but the definition of a 10 changes with each title that redefines what we *thought* we could expect from a videogame. The score itself is really an indication of how good a game is at that moment in time. The text is more important.



Letter of the Month wins a copy of: **SINGULARITY**

Congratulations Cathy! Get stuck into this serviceable shooter from Activision!

CUTTINGS

WE KNOW YOU GOT SOUL

Demon's Souls. Why do I keep coming back to you? You say you'll stop hurting me but I know that's a lie. Why must you hurt the ones you love?

Alan Peck, via Facebook

We feel your pain. We hit that and quit that though. It was just too much.

PLEASE NOTE

To my lovely wife: the PS3 LAN party is on the 21st. I'll be home at dawn.

David Brady, via Facebook

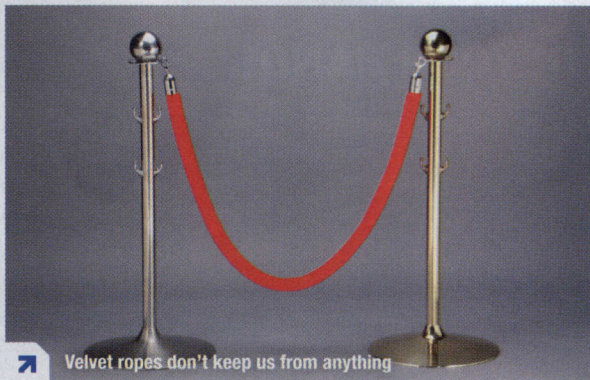
Are we invited?

THE PROPOSAL

I'm recruiting volunteers to participate in the next epic war to give KOEI new material. No guns.

Che Patterson, via Facebook

We're in.



Velvet ropes don't keep us from anything

THE OFFICIAL FICTION

Hi guys!

I picked up my first copy ever of *OPS* this week – the July edition. I'm the kinda guy who tends to buy magazines for the pictures, if you know what I mean. And your magazine had the pictures it took to make me pluck it off the magazine rack. Coupled with the fact that I'm crazy about my PS3, it was love at first sight on the supermarket floor.

To be honest with you, I wasn't expecting any honest reviews of PlayStation games from the "Official" PlayStation magazine. I thought

it would be more or less a "wank fest" of propaganda – a bit like reading video reviews from a Video Ezy instore magazine.

But when I had finished drooling over the eye candy in the July edition I did actually start reading the articles – and man was I pleasantly surprised!

If a game sucked – then you said it sucked, in a nicer way – though if I were a game publisher then "got potential" or "needs work" would leave me whimpering and heading for the razor blades.

But what really pulled me into your write ups was the "gamers passion" that was evident in your stories. I normally go online to get my reviews, but I don't usually connect with the writers. For example, when you guys drooled through the *Red Dead Redemption* article (my favourite article) I was there drooling with you – and I already own the game! And I could tell there was no bullshit because you loved the game for exactly the same reasons I love the game! And your excitement was more than shallow puppy love – I could tell that the writer really loved this game.

As you may have guessed, my favourite game at the moment is *RDR*. I traded in my copy of *Modern Warfare 2* to get it. I loved *MW2* but, to be honest, once I bought *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* I just couldn't play *MW2* again – bigger maps and being able to blow stuff up sealed *CODs* fate. But even *BF2* doesn't get a look in once I got *RDR*. Being

SPEAK TO US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
The Media Factory
PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction,
NSW 1355

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FRIDAY

able to shoot anything that moves just does something for me. And I keep discovering new things to do, which is why I appreciated your "7 Things to do in *RDR*." I had not discovered "train jacking" yet so I'm going to leave the rabbits and chickens alone for a bit to go track down that red choo choo on my map!

I don't just love my PS3 for the games though. I use it to record TV with Play TV, listen to music on VIDZONE, watch IVIEW, and wirelessly stream the movies I have on my PC.

Seriously, I don't buy magazine subscriptions – but in your case I have made an exception and placed my order. I don't normally write in to magazines either – so why am I doing it now? Because you give away cool prizes for best answer – the guy in this issue got a free copy of *RDR*! Now have serious game envy – even though I already own the game!

I look forward to the next edition of *OPS*.
Passionate PS3 gamer, signing out..

David Goransson, via email

Thanks David! We're very happy to know you enjoyed what you read because that's the number one reason we write anything in the first place. Our first priority is always to our readers.

David does bring up a good point: that some may presume our "Official" monicker suggests that we're biased in some way, particularly towards Sony.

Our regular readers will know that this isn't the case. Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia is completely independent. We're not owned by Sony or paid by Sony.

Unlike an instore-style magazine, which exists mainly as a tool for marketers, we're here for gamers. We'd be pretty awful critics if we gave everything top marks!

The benefits are that readers get a recognisable masthead and we don't have to explain who we are, where we're from and why we're worth somebody's time each time we attend a videogame event. People are always happy to speak with us.

It also means we get access to exclusive opportunities thanks to our relationship with the Sony brand. Last year, for instance, one Australian media outlet was invited to Polyphony Digital to see *GTS* – and it was us.

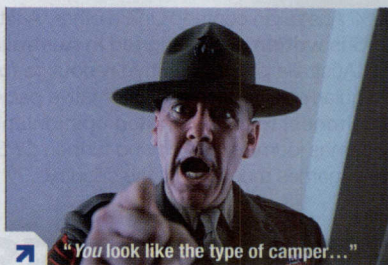
WHO'S BAD?

Hello guys. I am writing to you guys to complain about spawn killing and people who can't do anything than sit in a tank or chopper in *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*. It is a great game; but sometimes I will be playing Conquest and the enemy will get all the flags and force us back to our spawn and they will just fly constantly in circles bombing the spawn or sit behind the spawn in their stupid tanks making it impossible to escape the frustration and terrible k/d ratio. I know I could just leave but lately I have been getting messages saying that my skill level has depleted due to my bad playing or whatever. One time I went 1 kill to

17 deaths and I got a glance at the credits counter down next to the map and it was Us: 2 to Them: 217. Ridiculous! Anyways, I'm gonna end this on a good note and tell you guys how much the mag rocks and I look forward to your next one. Keep up the great work.

Alan Peck, via email

We hear you mate. You should talk to Dave. Dude is livid about this stuff.



"You look like the type of camper..."

STUCK IN

Hello *OPS*, I'd like to add MY point of view on gaming addiction.

First of all, people who react so badly to video game addiction are idiots, because video games are nowhere near as bad as alcohol or smoking. Playing too much videogames is potentially dangerous, but then again, too much of everything is potentially dangerous. A girl once died by drinking too much water in some competition, true story.

Also I'd like to say sitting on a computer is more dangerous than playing games, since you're closer to the screen and all. Finally I'd like to say that people who are overly worried about video games need to wake up and realise that video games are like an interactive TV, and are NOT bad for us.

Saed Batshoan, via email

Didn't she die during a contest to win a videogame console though? We totally agree it's a non-issue – but don't use that example if you get into a debate!

WIN

Hey guys, just wanted to tell you all that my proposal to my better half and gaming buddy in this month's issue was a big YES! Looks like I'm getting married!!!! Thanks *OPS* for helping me pop the question!

Alana Brennan, via Facebook

That's awesome! Congratulations to you both, all the best!



Wedding cake?

THE OPS FACEBOOK PAGE NEEDS YOU!

If you're on Facebook and you read the mag (which you're doing *right now*), join our fan page for exclusive competitions, breaking news and intelligent banter with other gamers, fans and the guys who make this award-winning publication. Search for *Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia*, or go to facebook.com/OPSAustralia, and get involved!

STOREFRONT

We play the games so you can pick the cream from the crock. What deliciousness have you bought lately?



**Megan Jackson
LEGO Harry Potter**

"LEGO Harry Potter! See, gaming is not all about shooting people with guns. You can kill them with wands and magic too!"



**Matthew Bordignon
Chronicles of Riddick**

"\$12 at GAME! I heard it was good so I had to try it."



**Sam Brownley
God of War III**

"Picked up a copy of the God of War III Ultimate Edition from eBay and is nothing but awesome."



**James Paine
WET**

"WET for \$29 at JB Hi-Fi. Not bad at all."

CAPTION THIS!

Readers had over 100 attempts at this bad boy, which meant narrowing it down was difficult. In the end **Tiny Tim's** random angle got us giggling. What size are you Tiny? XL?



Five dead as psychic frisbee tournament gets out of hand

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Thanks to Paramount Pictures we have copies of Francis Ford Coppola's classic Mafia story *The Godfather* and its sequels, *The Godfather Part II* and *Part III*, as well as *Beneath Hill 60*, *Collateral*, *Saving Private Ryan* and *War of the Worlds* all on Blu-ray to give away to the first 35 new subscribers!

Brendan Cowell stars in the incredible true story set of *Beneath Hill 60* during the first World

War, as part of a squad sent to dig tunnels and plant explosives under enemy lines.

Collateral sees Tom Cruise as a hitman and Jamie Foxx as his unwilling taxi driver for the night. Steven Spielberg's epic WWII drama, *Saving Private Ryan*, also hits Blu-ray, as well as his terrific sci-fi *War of the Worlds*. One of these great titles could be yours, just for subscribing. Don't miss out!



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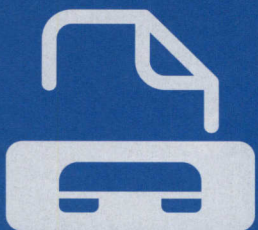


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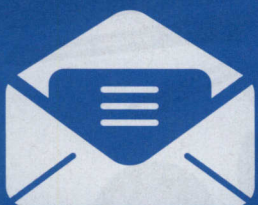
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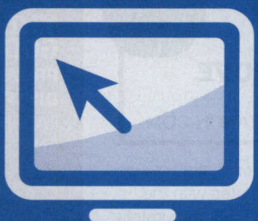
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FATHER'S DAY GIFT GUIDE

Welcome to the *OPS* Father's Day Gift Guide! We've hunted down the best bits of kit to suit your dad for his best Father's Day ever. Or, you can forget your old man and just get something for yourself instead. Enjoy!

THE DAD WHO HAS EVERYTHING



SAMSUNG SERIES 7 LED 3DTV

PRICE: \$2899 (40-INCH), \$3699 (46-INCH), \$4799 (55-INCH)

CONTACT: SAMSUNG.COM.AU

We reckon your old man wants to be a trendsetter, but wants to be smart about it. With a 55-inch belter he could probably start his own cinema with this eye-popping 3D set that also adds an extra dimension to your 2D flicks, and he can even take it online to watch YouTube clips. Plus, the optional Skype camera gives him the power to make phone calls from the front row of his own theatre.



RED BALLOON GIFT VOUCHER

PRICE: \$50 - \$200 (FOR GIFT VOUCHERS)

CONTACT: REDBALLOON.COM.AU

A gift voucher? That's a cop-out gift, right? Not quite. Has your old man driven a full-blown WRX rally car as it smacks along a dirt track, or held his lunch while the Tigermoth he's in does a barrel roll? A RedBalloon voucher gives him the chance to do this, and more. The beauty is, you can choose how much to spend, but the rally car laps are more than reasonable at \$195.

LOGITECH G27

PRICE: \$599 **CONTACT:** LOGITECH.COM/EN-AU/HOME

Every gaming rig needs a centrepiece, and this leather-wrapped wheel is that. Incorporating a dual-motor force feedback mechanism that replicates bumps and ripples on the track, as well as communicating loss of traction and weight shifting, dad can become the next (virtual) Mark Webber, just in time for GT5.

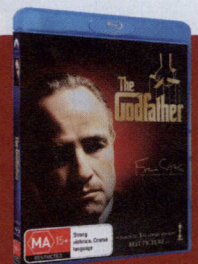


PLAYSTATION MOVE

PRICE: \$69.99/\$49.99

CONTACT: AU.PLAYSTATION.COM

Launching late in September, make your dad the envy of his (and your) mates with the latest games device for his PS3. Accurately mimicking his movements courtesy of the main and sub controller, these motion controls promise to expand on his regular game-play time with a stack of titles being made for Move.



THE GODFATHER

PRICE: \$39.95 **CONTACT:**

DISTRIBUTOR: PARAMOUNT HOME ENTERTAINMENT

One of the greatest movie series of all time launches on Blu-ray and for the bloke who has it all, this trilogy will make him the Don of entertainment.

GENEVA MODEL S SPEAKER

PRICE: \$599 | CONTACT: AUDIODYNAMICS.COM.AU

This is more like a piece of art than a speaker system, forgoing usual tacky, plastics and instead is wrapped up in beautiful lacquered wood. Happily, it also sounds amazing, and supports all mp3 players and external devices, courtesy of the auxiliary port on the back. It even has a dock on top (and an FM radio if you're tired of your own tunes).

STYLISH DUDE

LOGITECH HARMONY 600 REMOTE

PRICE: \$99.95 | CONTACT: LOGITECH.COM/EN-AU/HOME

Fact: dads hate mess. Hate it. Solution? Streamline. The Harmony remote replaces up to five other remotes for audiovisual devices, and with the Harmony Adapter it'll take care of the PS3 too. This way, Dad can keep the 600 on him at all times for total control, and toss all the other remotes down the back of the couch forever.



THE JAMES MAY COLLECTION

PRICE: \$49.95 | DISTRIBUTOR: MADMAN

Motoring journo James May delves into the history of stuff, inventions and even makes some of your dad's favourite toys supersized. It'll make your old man feel young again.



BRAUN SERIES 7 790CC ELECTRIC SHAVER

PRICE: \$549 | CONTACT: BRAUN.COM/AU

Whether your old man has chiselled features a blacksmith could forge iron on, or cheeks that make grandmothers everywhere set their fingers to maximum pinch, the 790cc will make him look his best. The tech that powers it is remarkable, and the intensity of the shave can be customised to adapt to different areas of your dad's chops. Plus, this follicle-seeking missile will clean and lubricate itself after each use.

SAMSUNG GALAXY S

PRICE: \$849 | CONTACT: SAMSUNG.COM.AU

Was your dad just thinking about getting a phone that everyone else has? Think again. This is a smartphone in more than one sense, with HSPA for super-fast web-browsing and also N protocol Wi-Fi to save on data bills. It'll even connect to other DLNA devices (hey, your PS3 is one of those!) to stream music etc. Plus, that screen looks richer than Hugh Hefner in his best smoking jacket.

**SPORTY
DAD**



GARMIN FORERUNNER 110 GPS WATCH

PRICE: FROM \$249 | CONTACT: BUY.FORERUNNER.COM/SHOP

The dad that likes to go wandering along a mountain track should get one of these on his wrists immediately. This smart timepiece will keep him going in the right direction with a built-in GPS, as well as tracking his speed and distance. This water-resistant Forerunner also boasts a slim profile and can also be connected to the Garmin Connect website to map his ramblings.



PLAY TV

PRICE: \$159 | CONTACT: AU.PLAYSTATION.COM

Hook this up to your PS3 in about five minutes, and dad will be able to pause live free-to-air TV, record one channel while watching another, AND take care of whatever the hell's stopping him from watching motorsport. He'll even be able to play a game whilst recording *Sports Tonight*, and watch his recorded programs via a PSP. Genius.

LG 50PK750 PLASMA TV

PRICE: \$2414 (50-INCH), \$3449 (60-INCH) | CONTACT: LGE.COM.AU

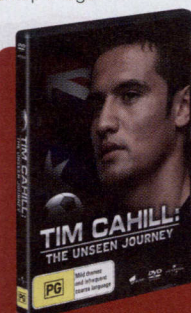
Sports demand a good screen with a fast refresh rate; that way, when your dad's ball of choice is catapulted from one end of the pitch/oval/course to the other it won't have a blurry tail rivaling Haley's Comet. This slim plasma has a monstrous 600Hz refresh rate – five to 10 times faster than most other screens – and deep, rich blacks for a sharp image.



OLYMPUS MJU TOUGH 8010 DIGITAL CAMERA

PRICE: \$599 | CONTACT: OLYMPUS.COM.AU

This thing's not just called 'tough' for nothing. It'll take all manner of abuse, from being dropped onto the stands at the footy from a height of 2m, to a hike through -10°C terrain. Plus, it'll even cope with being left in a 10-metre-deep puddle. Put in an SD and your dad can also shoot high-def movies, forever capturing The Greatest Goal Of All Time.



TIM CAHILL: THE UNSEEN JOURNEY

PRICE: \$24.95 | DISTRIBUTOR: UNIVERSAL PICTURES

More than just a greatest hits collection of Cahill's goals, this is an expose of the man's life on and off the pitch.

FATHER'S DAY

ASUS V232H MONITOR

PRICE: \$349 | CONTACT: ASUS.COM.AU

Striking the right balance between size and cost is this pearly. A damn fine 23-inch screen this is a great unit solely for the pleasure of playing games on, and it's a gamer's delight, supporting 1080p via HDMI. It has a small footprint so it doesn't take up much desk space, and the screen has a matte finish so glare and reflections are as dead as your next frag.

**FORGET DAD,
WHAT ABOUT ME?**

NETGEAR MS2120 NAS

PRICE: \$199 (DISKLESS), \$319 (1TB), \$539 (2TB) | CONTACT: NETGEAR.COM.AU

Chances are, you have more movies, pictures and mp3s than you do time to enjoy them all, but the point is that you want them available, ready to go and NOW. Enter: Netgear. Compact and unobtrusive, you can fill this NAS unit with up to two terabytes of storage, and it even has a second drive bay to back up data on the first.

SONY MDRNC500D HEADPHONES

PRICE: \$599 | CONTACT: SONY.COM.AU

Granted, your PS3's whisper quiet, but for maximum immersion get a pair of these cans. Able to cut the roar out of a jumbo jet, Sony's noise-cancelling headphones will put you into your own cocoon. They're comfortable for marathon gaming sessions, and have their own carry case when you're not in front of the PS3.

Handily, the cord comes off in case you want some peace and quiet.

JVC PICSIO GC-FM1 VIDEO RECORDER

PRICE: \$199 | CONTACT: JVC.COM.AU

So you want to be a video superstar? Keep this mobile phone-sized device in your pocket and you can shoot high-def 1080p video files that are perfect for YouTube. It's dead easy to get to grips with, and also has an HDMI port so you can connect it to your TV. Handily, it also accepts SDHC cards for up to 32GB of storage.

PETER GRIFFIN BOX SET

PRICE: \$189 | DISTRIBUTOR: TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Hands-down one of the funniest shows on TV is now in a mega box set with seasons 1-9, as well as a Peter Griffin T-shirt.



“You don’t actually shoot anything directly. You just toss it through holes in space”

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SHOOTER | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** 2011
DISTRIBUTOR: EA | **DEVELOPER:** VALVE | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

PORTAL 2

The bitch is back

A glowing orange eye. An AI with an electronic voice that’s initially soothing yet emotionless before revealing itself as a sociopath. The Companion Cube. Blue and orange ovals that bend space. That final, catchy, song. The cake is a lie. *Portal* is as much about its iconography as it is about its gameplay, and while the experiment-turned-game gained a lot of fans and critical acclaim its sequel intends to do much more than just re-hash old ground.

Portal wasn’t a ground-up Valve title, but was based up a game made by students at the DigiPen Institute of Technology, originally called *Narbacular Drop*. The concept was there: place two separate portals on a solid surface to allow objects or a character to pass through. Since the portals could be placed at odd angles to each other, gravity had to be taken in account as soon as the character (or object) made it through to the other side.

This is the concept, anyway. In practice it makes your head spin, demanding a brand new way to approach a familiar shooter set-up. Although you have a gun in hand and you view the world from a first person point of view you don’t actually shoot anything directly. You just toss it through holes in space.

Portal’s inclusion on the seminal *Orange*

Box was a safe bet. Being packaged with the *Half-Life 2* series and *Team Fortress 2*, titles that had either already proven themselves on the PC or had high expectations, meant that even if the game wasn’t received well by critics and gamers it was still going to make its way into thousands of consoles. Plus, it was only four hours long; too short to be released as a standalone game, too big to risk digital distribution. What gamers found was a coherent, simple story that went hand in hand with astounding ideas that challenged the norm. What Valve found was that people wanted more.

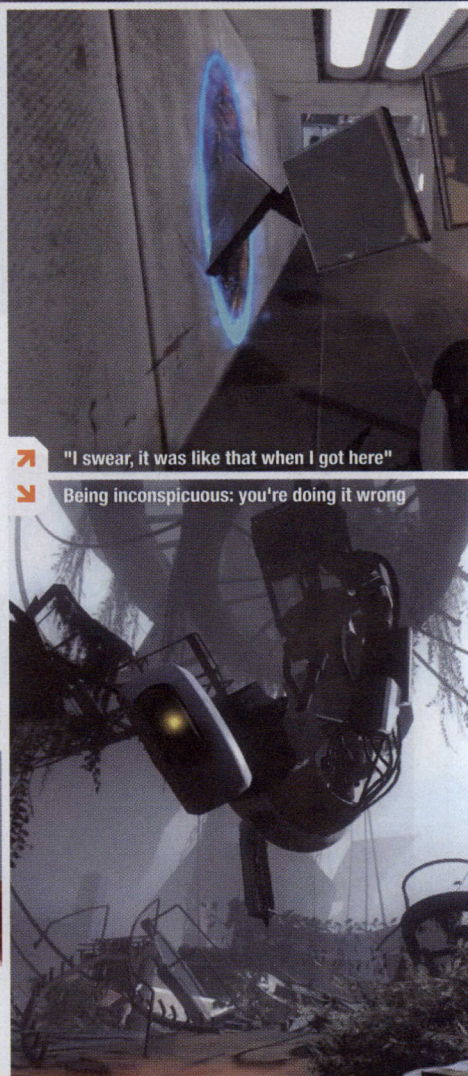
So, the sequel. If you haven’t played *Portal* yet, take a few hours out of your time and knock it over – cultural references aside it’s unlike

THE PITCH

Platforming meets puzzles meets shooter. It’s *Portal* with more toys.



Choc-orange or propulsion gel? You decide



“I swear, it was like that when I got here”

Being inconspicuous: you’re doing it wrong



41 RUGBY LEAGUE
The long-awaited return of rugby league to PS3!



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First details on this cutting-edge game!



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A new contender for off-road glory takes to the backroads!



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The first look at BioWare's hotly-anticipated follow-up

GABE NEWELL AND HIS HUMBLE PIE

Long-time readers will have read in our quotes box (on page 21) and elsewhere on the net various opinions Gabe Newell and Valve had on the PS3. Like, how Newell thought the PS3 was "a total disaster", how he wanted it to be "more open like a Mac, than more closed like a Gamecube" in reference to how the platform's going to be supported (we think). But now? All's right with the world, as Newell got on stage at Sony's E3 press conference back in June this year to say that the PS3 version of *Portal 2* will be "the best version on any console." It'll also incorporate Steam into the build for automatic updates. This, hopefully, means we'll see mods on the PS3 version of *Portal 2*. Hurrah!

Backyard Blitz's toughest assignment yet

It was at this point Chell discovered she was in the Large Hadron Collider

The world's most awful Skill Tester

THE TURRETS

One of the most frequent sources of hilarity in *Portal* was the turrets. They're just as fun to mess with in the sequel. If you're tired of them constantly asking, "Are you still there?" you can hear them squeal as you melt 'em down.

anything you've ever played. Like any sequel to a successful game the developers have to give fans more of what they want while still being accessible enough to entice newcomers.

Chell's back and so is the evil GLaDOS, though the Aperture Science Labs are in total disarray after the explosion. Ceilings and tiles share their space with creeping vines while GLaDOS puts the lab back together to run more tests on Chell. They're not alone. Another personality core with a southern English accent called Wheatley also joins in, and while his demeanour suggests he isn't out to incinerate you that doesn't mean things won't change.

Along with Wheatley's intermittent company, Chell's also blessed with more environmental gadgets in the test chambers. The Excursion Funnel, a slow-moving jet of blue spirals, will transport any object that gets caught in its beam. Using the portal gun she

can extend the beam to carry herself around the chambers, but also to remove turrets, carry cubes and so forth.

Other toys include the Propulsion Gel, Repulsion Gel, Aerial Faith Plate and the Pneumatic Diversity Vent. Coat the floors in Propulsion Gel and Chell will rapidly pick up speed and run faster than normal; extremely useful for launching off ramps and clearing huge gaps. Its cousin, Repulsion Gel, gives the surface of anything it touches a rubber-like property. Splash it on the floor and Chell will bound upward when she touches it. Cover opposing walls and you'll oscillate between the two like pinball between bumpers. Cubes become unpredictable bouncy balls, ideal for trying to skittle multiple turrets.

Aerial Faith Plates are essential hard-mounted spring-loaded boards that flick Chell and any other object in a certain direction, while the Pneumatic Diversity Vent is a suction tube that acts as a huge vacuum. A cleverly placed portal under it directs the vacuum to the portal's partner, and if the vacuum's placed in the middle of a room it'll suck anything that's not tied down – for example, a troublesome turret or two, or loose wall tiles – into it.

There's also stuff that Chell can pick up, like cubes with mirrors in them that redirect laser beams. These beams not only trigger switches, but can also set stuff on fire. It's an impressive line-up of tools that fit perfectly well within the

Portal universe, and learning how to exploit them one by one, and then having the nous to know the best way to combine them, should validate the series from being a clever side project to full-blown release.

Valve obviously has enough confidence to make this work as a standalone project – we don't yet know how many hours it'll take to play through from start to finish. However, bet on the storyline and characterisation being much more important this time. Valve are expert storytellers, and with a sound exposition we may just have another favourite silent protagonist to spend our hours with.

See it on our cover disc. **Paul Taylor**

THEY SAY

"*Portal 2* is the sequel to 2007's *Portal*, which won 70 industry achievement awards"

WE SAY

Already looking as addictive and smart as its predecessor, the changes in environment coupled with new mechanics mean there's enough to make this challenging yet familiar.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INCOMING

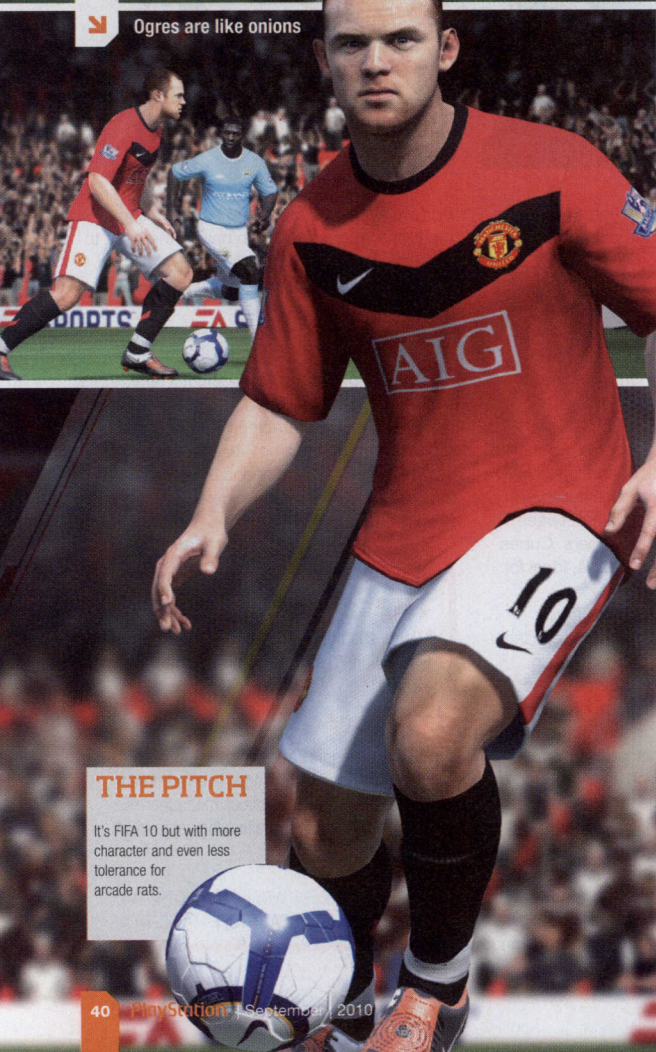


CLUB O'MUG

The neatest new feature in *FIFA 11* is one many players have been waiting on for donkey's. Dubbed the Creation Centre it allows players to use a web-based application to create fictitious teams and players, complete with kit and crest, and then download them to their console. Imagine creating Crunch FC, designing a crest of a fist holding dynamite, and blowing the stars of the Italian League off the park. We bags Emilio Estevez as our coach.



- Not pictured: vuvuzelas
- Ogres are like onions



THE PITCH

It's *FIFA 10* but with more character and even less tolerance for arcade rats.

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SPORT | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: EA | **DEVELOPER:** EA CANADA | **PLAYERS:** 1-22 (ONLINE)

FIFA 11

You cannot O.D. on football

It is going to take over the world. *FIFA*, the unstoppable net-bursting leviathan that no doubt retreats to a Scrooge McDuck-like money pit each night, is obsessed. Obsessed with improvement.

It's likely neurological – perhaps stemming from its adolescent days when Konami, the big brutal bully from next door, paddled and steamed it on the world stage. In any case, *FIFA* can't age gracefully. Under the cloak and menace of Producer David Rutter and his team of footballing ascetics, *FIFA 11* is on track to become more realistic, more thorough, more customisable. But how?

After squatting on the *FIFA* forums, Rutter and his team have amassed a new manifesto to fix the game's minor qualms and apply some major overhauls.

The first bullet point is the new passing system that's set to reward skill and cut down on the pinball-like feel of midfield movement. Players will now have to fiddle and fidget with the power of each pass. Overcook it and that searing thru-ball will find the wrong side of the sideline. Undercook it and one might as well hand over possession with a jar of Christmas chutney. Savvy midfielders will also be able to apply all sorts of movement to the ball in open play; soccer junkies who've ever wanted to put backspin on a lofted through-ball will be in nirvana.

The next goal *FIFA 11* is out to pot is a feature called Personality +. Clearly the *FIFA* clan weren't happy with the player variety in *FIFA 10*, so Personality + is all about taking player differentiation and attributes to a

higher plane. Not only will each player look substantially more like their real life counterpart facially, but the team have upped the number of body types from three to nine. These aren't just cosmetic improvements either. Expect Messi to be able to accelerate out of a thicket of quicksand while heavier strikers, like Rooney, will be able to pin back defenders then pump in a goal from a different postcode.

Then there are the smaller additions. Online will feature 11-on-11 action so players can choose to play in goals. They'll be custom soundtracks and chants that can be assigned to each team. And Manager Mode will, as is usual, get a raft of updates and improvements.

Yes, *FIFA* is one heck of a compulsive beast. Cursed to never sit back on its goal line and be content with a mere roster update. Amen, we say. Let's see how high this freak franchise can go. **James Ellis**

THEY SAY

"*FIFA 11* reinvents player authenticity – on and off the ball – for every player and at every position on the pitch"

WE SAY

This will be essential for hardened soccer fiends. Will fly-by-night players appreciate the new additions? Probably not. But when you've got as many fans as *FIFA*, who cares?

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING



“There appears to be a focus on big hits”

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: SPORT | EXPECTED RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: HES | DEVELOPER: BIG ANT | PLAYERS: 1-4

RUGBY LEAGUE LIVE

“Pearce off, Jack, Gibbs on”

THE PITCH

The *Rugby League* series makes the long-awaited hop from PS2 to PS3.



Rugby *League Live* will be the first rugby league game available on PS3. It's been nearly five years since *Rugby League 2*, and while we've seen a tweaked *World Cup Edition* of the latter and *Rugby League 3* on Wii since then, there's been no sign of it for PS3.

Sky-high development costs have very likely forced an independent game like this to be placed on hold until a more opportune moment to release. With PS3 penetration in Australia booming the time is finally ripe.

More precise details are scant, but we do know *Rugby League Live* will feature the full array of teams you'll expect. Over 40 of them in all, from the NRL and the UK Super League, plus State of Origin, City v Country, and World Cup sides.

Rugby League Live will also include four-person multiplayer, and there appears to be a focus on big hits, with “bone crunching tackles and impact camera replays” on the cards.



Not pictured: NSW winning

BACKSEAT DEVELOPERS

We're been poring over the limited details of this game and have come up with a few thoughts on how to improve it in the future. If money grew on trees here's what we'd be sinking it into.



EUPHORIA

The focus on big hits appeals to us but after playing the euphoria-driven *Backbreaker* we're slightly worried it might feel a bit too canned. How big of a hit on the wallet is licensing euphoria these days? NaturalMotion has already proven it works in a sport game. All we want now is to see it in a *real* sports game.



EXPERT COMMENTATOR

Based on the last two NRL games we reckon Vossy might sound especially lonely this time around. An expert commentator added into the mix to chime in every now and then, or drop in a half-time report, would help immensely. If Sterio's not keen, Jason Taylor did well filling in for Joey on Triple M's Monday Night Football. What about the Dell? He's everywhere. Does that dude ever say no to a job?



LITTLELEAGUEPLANET

You'll be able to build custom players, teams and comps in *Rugby League Live* but the web-based system (where user-generated content can be shared) in *FIFA 11* sounds like the future to us. If you didn't have the skill to build your local first grade squad or a classic team from the past you could download from someone who did.

Commentary will be provided once again by Andrew Voss. We'd expect much of this will be recycled from the last titles, but we'd love be proven wrong.

AFL fans, likely spurned by the fact Big Ant is dropkicking an up-until-recently unannounced NRL game out the door before its AFL title (announced eons ago), will express their indifference or voice their dismay a Victorian developer deep in the heartland of the AFL is making them wait because of a rugby league game for two measly states.

We're not about to get into an inter-code stoush here but it's always worth remembering that – while rugby league only dominates in NSW and Queensland – these two states account for more than half the Australian population.

It's already clear from the screens you'd be a deadset bonehead to expect *Rugby League Live* to sparkle as a visual equal to the likes of *FIFA 11* – which is just to the left for those of you who are reading this magazine backwards. Yes, compared to a commercial and critical darling like the *FIFA* series – which has a budget so big you could see it from orbit – we imagine *Rugby League Live* will come out looking somewhere

between smashed crab and dropped pie.

Rugby League Live has neither the stratospheric cash reserves of EA nor the colossal worldwide appeal of soccer at its disposal, however. Basically, what you see is what you get. However, with depth in the modes and robust enough gameplay *Rugby League Live* could succeed in the same way the last versions did.

We'll see in September. **Luke Reilly**

THEY SAY

“*Rugby League Live* brings all the hard hitting action and excitement of the greatest game of all to your lounge room”

WE SAY

Should be a smash even though *FIFA* will romp past it. They say beggars can't be choosers though. We'll see how it goes on the paddock upon release.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INCOMING

ABOUT THE HEELS

Raiden's transformation into an unstoppable cyborg cyclone of unadulterated death in *MGS4* went a long way in disarming criticisms about him being overly feminine-looking in *MGS2*. And then they put high heels on him. Yeah, we know it supposed to be some sort of tactical design function and that Raiden is able to use his feet as a second pair of hands. They still *look* like high heels, and Raiden still *looks* like a transvestite.

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** JULY 2011
DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE | **DEVELOPER:** KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

METAL GEAR SOLID: RISING

Raiden gives Snake the chop



Extreme limbo

THE PITCH

The *MGS* character nobody really likes gets his own game. Again.



With a fresh development team behind the-scenes and an emphasis on pure action, *Metal Gear Solid: Rising* is being positioned as a counterpart to the stealth-based games in the long-running, fan-favourite franchise.

Based between *MGS2* and *MGS4*, *MGS: Rising* features Raiden as he appeared in *MGS4* – in his cyborg ninja guise.

With the game not set for release until mid-2011, little has been revealed regarding the motivation behind the action. We have, however, seen the action in action – and it's quite remarkable.

The key feature of *MGS: Rising* is called *zan-datsu* (or "cut and take"), which involves cutting through enemies and taking useful items from them. For instance, in the E3 2010 footage Raiden rips a battery – in the form of a glowing, fluid-filled mechanical spine – from a dismembered cyborg foe.

It seems *MGS: Rising* will feature two forms of swordplay: straightforward third-person slashing that will cleave your enemies into a variety of chunks and a more sophisticated and precise method. The latter will allow you to carve any object at will along a geometrical plane using a free-slicing mode. Brick pillars, vans, watermelons, humans – virtually any object in the game can be cut (excluding key elements of the environment, lest the entire game descend into chaos).

The side-effect of near-infinite dismemberment, however, will likely be more than a few raised eyebrows at the Classification Board. 'Excessive' dismemberment has seen titles fall foul of the guidelines more than once in the past few years and, unlike *Dead Rising 2* (which squeaked through classification unscathed), *MGS: Rising* doesn't have the benefit of its cast of cannon fodder being zombies.

The developers were quick to point out that there'll be no player benefit for cutting enemies into sandwich-sizes slices. We hate to be cynical, but even a title as high-profile as *MGS: Rising* is going to have its work cut

➤ "No, no, no, I said *prices* on vans slashed!"



out for it when it's being discussed with terms like 'sliced in twain', 'geysers of blood' and 'severed torsos'.

It's a "no comment" from local representative Mindscape at this stage.

Not convinced by the direction *MGS: Rising*'s going in? Don't worry. Like we said, *MGS: Rising* isn't a replacement for conventional *Metal Gear*. Kojima has stressed to fans not to freak out: they have plans.

Could this have anything to do with the groundshaking PS3 exclusive Kojima is rumoured to be revealing at Tokyo Game Show this year? Kojima has dismissed it, but it seems likely. **— Luke Reilly**

THEY SAY

"*Metal Gear Solid: Rising* stars Raiden – one of the most popular characters within the *MGS* universe."

WE SAY

Huh? Don't get us wrong – *Rising* looks like an absolute barnstormer. But did we miss the memo saying Raiden became popular? We're confused here.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

THE RALLY CURSE

Every man and his dog knows about the *Madden* Curse, where players who feature on the cover of EA's flagship sports title seem to be more likely to cop a career-threatening injury or fall into a major form slump. The Rally Curse is far worse; it's deadly. And nobody even acknowledges it. All jokes aside, Colin McRae, Richard Burns and Possum Bourne have *all* had their faces on rally games in the past decade or so – and they're *all* dead. We'd advise rally stars to steer clear of game endorsements, but they probably already are. Sportspeople are a superstitious bunch.



Now we're hungry

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: RACING | EXPECTED RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: OCTOBER | DEVELOPER: AFA | PLAYERS: 1-TBC

THE PITCH

Realism comes back to rallying, from the makers of the *SBK* series

WRC

Over crest, don't cut

We copped an inordinate amount of flak last year when it surfaced in our review of *Colin McRae DiRT 2* that we hated its new Yankee Doodle direction.

In March, we caught Codemasters kingpin Gavin Cheshire admitting to the UK's *Edge* magazine a similar sentiment.

"*DiRT 2*: brilliant game but it's all American accents, so maybe we're a little over the top with those. Maybe we should fly the flag a bit more," he said.

We'll resist the urge to squeal we told you so to our detractors.

At any rate, a lot of the *DiRT* series' success can probably be attributed to the absence of any other big-name rally titles. It's been around five years since the last WRC-branded rally game. Former flagbearer Evolution has been busying itself with *MotorStorm* since then, leaving rally fans to the likes of *DiRT* and *Sega Rally*.

Italian studio Milestone, famous for making amongst the world's best two-wheeled racing games, is about to change that with *WRC*. It has a real opportunity here to pick up rally gamers dying for the realistic point-to-point

rallying experience that off-road games just have not been delivering.

WRC will feature 78 different rally stages (over 550km of roads; sealed, unsealed and otherwise) from the 13 countries which have and are hosting a round of the 2010 World Rally Championship.

The official licence brings with it everything you'd expect – a full array of official cars and drivers, from Sébastien Loeb to Ken Block and everyone in between. A new take on career progression (*Road to the WRC*) sees the inclusion of the companion championships to the WRC. *WRC* will feature the Production World Rally Championship (or PWRC, limited to production-based cars homologated under the Group-N rules), the Super 2000 World Rally Championship (or SWRC, limited to production-based cars homologated under the Super 2000 rules) and the Junior World Rally Championship (or JWRC, limited to drivers under 28 years old and cars in the Super 1600 specification).

Milestone is going to great lengths to keep the game accessible with a number of driving aids, but hopes to appeal to sim junkies with



It gives you wings

touches like independent sound feedback for each tyre. In cabin-view, for instance, Milestone hopes that you'll be able to tell where you're losing grip by pinpointing the direction of the squealing. This is, we're assuming, as long as you have surround sound.

There is the gorilla-sized shadow of the 400-pound presence of *GT5*, due to drop one month after *WRC* and also featuring WRC cars and off-road tracks. Still, as sexy as it is, the rally component of *GT5* won't be able to compete with *WRC* for content.

We'll update you next issue on the intricacies of the handling model after a longer hands-on later this month. **— Luke Reilly**

THEY SAY

"The main goal of the game is to bring the action of the WRC to the living rooms of both rallying and gaming fans"

WE SAY

Will offer a more complete official WRC experience than *Gran Turismo 5*'s WRC content, although it simply won't look as good. Then again, what does?

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SOME HANG



Which of the 13 countries featured is this?



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RPG | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA
DISTRIBUTOR: EA | **DEVELOPER:** BIOWARE | **PLAYERS:** 1

DRAGON AGE II

Have at you, semi-naked she-elf

When the unproven IP *Dragon Age: Origins* was released the dark heroic fantasy turned our head faster than the chick from *The Exorcist*.

The connoisseurs among us were instantly attracted to its enthralling narrative and elegant combat system, whereas the more low-brow punters appreciated the blood-letting and the fact that nearly every party member was up for some pants-down action.

Fans of the original epic would do well to clear several hundred hours out of their calendars, as *Dragon Age II* is back to devour time like a Langolier with the munchies. This is much more than just a sequel too – BioWare is making some serious modifications to the formula, along with giving the story and mechanics a more contemporary overhaul.

But fear not, brave adventurer – the soul of

what we all loved about the original will remain intact. You will still have the role of an exemplary hero, a large cast of NPCs shall react to thine choices and you and your allies can cleave Darkspawn heads in gritty tactical combat.

This time around you'll be stepping into the +10 Awesome greaves of Hawke, Champion of Kirkwall. Some citizens of the Free Marches whisper that the champ survived the routing of Lothering. Some tell tales of him discovering something in the deepest parts of the abandoned dwarven mines. Others claim he is a powerful mage.

It's all one big case of Chinese whispers we're afraid. But the upside is that your hero's story and past are yours to define. One thing is for certain, Hawke is a legend in his own time, and like all mythical figures, his history is shrouded in rumour, hearsay, and loony

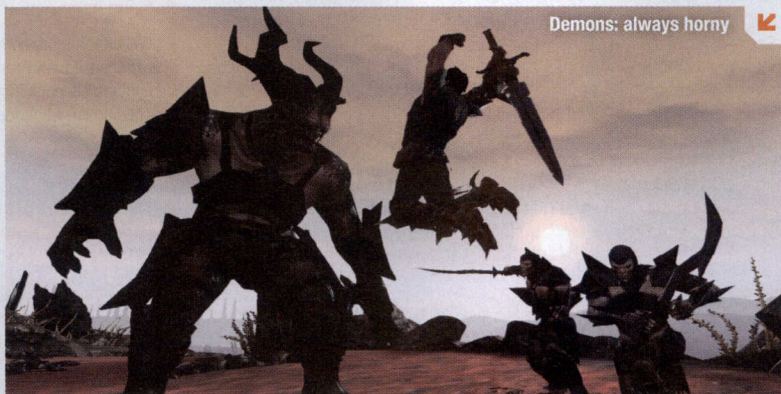
anecdotes where he fires potatoes from his armpits. Some things are set in stone however: you can't change your race from human, and every player will experience the same origin story. You can be male or female though. The benefit of this is recorded speech for your character rather than slabs of text.

It's interesting to note that while you will be controlling a different character to the one (or 'ones') you established in *Origins*, the choices your Grey Warden originally made will be imported from your save to influence this new world. Who is running Ferelden now? Who smashed the archdemon? Did you score that four-way with Isabella? They're all important canon questions that will carry across.

On the battlefield BioWare promises to retain what worked well from *Origins* while taking a laymore to the elements that didn't. We can still expect an emphasis on skills, spells and character customisation – and the three base classes will be more clearly defined.

Just what exactly BioWare has planned for the combat system is a little unclear at this point. If it were any other developer we'd be a little worried about the renovations, but the fact of the matter is: BioWare is the best in the business at what it does. We need this. Like, yesterday. **Adam Mathew**

Demons: always horny



THE PITCH

The epic story of Ferelden continues with you taking up the mantle of a mysterious, yet revered, legend.



THEY SAY

"We want you to be taking heads off, and we want everything to feel faster – but more importantly, responsive"

WE SAY

One year seems to be a short turnaround for a game as complex as this. Doesn't it take time to write and record decent dialogue? Should we be worried?

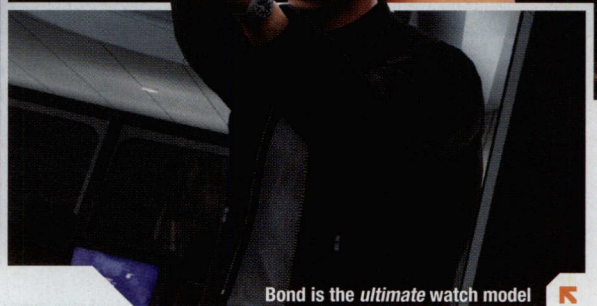
VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

“Blood Stone will be oozing with signature Bond moments”



Do you expect me to talk? No Mr. Bond, we expect you to start a Mexican wave!



Bond is the ultimate watch model

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION | DEVELOPER: BIZARRE CREATIONS | PLAYERS: 1-16

JAMES BOND 007: BLOOD STONE

“It looks like he’s attempting re-entry, sir”

THE PITCH

Bond, James Bond. This isn't tied to a movie, but enjoys the same lavish production values.



Ensnared in an ostentatious hotel in downtown London, we're surrounded by on-loan Aston Martin Vanquishes (Vanquish-i?) and it puts us in the mood to sample some Bond. As we flit from demo machine to demo machine with effortless grace and debonair panache, we realise that there is only thing that could possibly make us look more suave. Our cummerbund. It fell in the urinal.

Blood Stone is the non-movie-tie-in of talented developer Bizarre Creations and it left us both shaken by its high-adrenaline, and stirred (in the nether-regions) thanks to its digital Bond girl, Joss Stone. Running on *The Club*'s bespoke engine and penned by acclaimed Bond writer Bruce Feirstein (of *GoldenEye* fame), *Blood Stone* is a third-person shooter that instantly reminded us of *Bourne Conspiracy*, thanks to a rapid-fire gameplay mix of gunplay, vehicle chase sequences and wince-worthy hand-to-hand finishers.

Bizarre Creations has had a hand in a number of different genres over the years and the telltale signs of their past experience popped up in our demo. The fast-paced fire fights of *The Club* were easy to spot (along with a sweet, three-person insta-kill mechanic) as was the

decent driving physics of *Blur* when we had to chase down some bad guys and shunt them into oblivion with our sports car. The fisticuffs on offer kept in line with the 'hard case', new-age Bond thanks to brutal Krav Maga assaults that were more or less over before they began.

Plot-wise, Bond (voiced by Daniel Craig) joins forces with wealthy socialite Nicole Hunter (Joss Stone) to find a researcher who is feared dead. Spanning five exotic locations: Athens, Istanbul, Monaco, Siberia and Bangkok, Bond soon runs afoul of a terrorist group led by a man named Greco – who, incidentally, looked like a Middle Eastern version of Ben Affleck. On the orders of M (Judi Dench) Bond soon finds himself embroiled in a global conspiracy that involves a UK biochemical weapon and the titular blood diamonds.

Our undercover contacts at Bizarre assure us that *Blood Stone* will be oozing with signature Bond moments as we hunt down our enemies across a variety of environments, including city streets, rooftops, casinos, oil refineries, dams and even hovercrafts. Likewise the driving sections (set across both land and sea) boast a plethora of offensive driving techniques such as mid-chase shoot-outs, powersliding past

incoming gunship fire and jumps gnarly enough to make the *Dukes of Hazard* boys drool.

Blood Stone is shaping up quite nicely. Our only concern is that the facial animations are a touch primitive and we hope that the insta-kill skill will be balanced wisely. Sure, playing as Bond should be easy in theory, but we're still gonna need some challenge. We're liking what we see here; *Blood Stone* could well earn its license to thrill. **Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

"Become the ultimate secret agent in a fight to prevent the world's most dangerous weapon from falling into the wrong hands"

WE SAY

Geez, leave the guy alone already. He's already saved the world 22 different ways and rolled a DB9 seven times. Ah, what the hell. One more time.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INCOMING



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RACING | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** NOVEMBER 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: CRITERION GAMES | **DEVELOPER:** EA | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA

Run away and the cops'll call you yella

NEED FOR SPEED HOT PURSUIT

Because cold pursuits are lame

THE PITCH

This is a super-sized *Burnout Paradise* with furious po-pos and speeding yoyos. It's all about the thrill of the chase.



The *Need For Speed* series has reinvented itself more times than Madonna. Some of the metamorphoses were good – like the vogue, pose-striking *NFS Hot Pursuit* 2. Others were embarrassing and just plain unnatural – like the twin pointy-boobs that were *NFS ProStreet* and *NFS Undercover*. Rather than stuff *Need For Speed* back into the design cocoon and rip it out much later on as a mutated butterfly that nobody recognises, EA has wisely opted to just go back to what worked best for the series.

Drivers who feel the need for speed want to go fast for a reason: they want to be chased. *Burnout* developer Criterion understands this and they're on board and on target for delivering a racer that'll please your inner-Smokey and The Bandit. Like all good concepts it is simple; you're given the open-world landscape of Seacrest county (160km

of road, or four times Paradise City) and put behind the wheel of the world's fastest and most beautiful cars. Also you get to select one of two different career paths as either the fuzz, or the getaway driver. Even after mining the depths of E3, details are still sketchy as to what these singleplayer levels contain, but inside reports suggest that the two different paths will offer completely different play-styles that will warrant going through the game twice.

The hint of this comes from the different tactics and weapons available to both sides of the law in the multiplayer mode. In the demo we saw the cops could issue roadblocks, spike strips, aerial support and an EMP blast that messed with the opposition's controls. Racers, meanwhile, have their own tricks like radar-jamming equipment, a powerful nitro boost, a visibility cloak and the power to throw out a decoy signal to fool John Q. Law.

Interestingly, the driving physics feel fun and accessible, any player with opposable thumbs should be able to pick up the controller and drift a corner at 320 kilometres per hour after 10 seconds of playing the game. It doesn't feel quite as unrealistic as *Burnout Paradise* did, but it's certainly a far cry from a simulator.

Burnout Paradise blurred the line between online and offline play, and we can see *Hot Pursuit* will continue this with stunning speeds, takedowns, and getaways. Our spies tell us there will be a XP system persistent across both single and multiplayer called Bounty Points. Levelling up unlocks upgrades, cars and new tracks. We've also heard word that the game also allows for some brag-capturing that will let you broadcast your innate awesomeness.

Most exciting of all? With *Burnout Paradise*, Criterion earned quite a track record (pun intended) for delivering sweet DLC. This is something which is set to continue.

Honestly, we can't decide yet whether we're going to be a lead-foot speeder or a cop with a mean streak. Either way our aviators will be spotless and our driving record shall be anything but. **Adam Mathew**

Nice license plate. We also would have accepted 'CMPNS8N'



THEY SAY

"The cops are back in a big way. Get ready for breath-taking, open-world pursuits in the most adrenaline fuelled *NFS* ever"

WE SAY

We're getting all revved up about this. It seems that while the cost of admission will secure us a seat, in the end we may only need the very edge of it.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

“Everything seems to have **clicked into place**”

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | EXPECTED RELEASE: AUGUST 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K | DEVELOPER: 2K CZECH | PLAYERS: 1

You can change plates and paint cars

THE PITCH

GTA meets *Goodfellas*, set in the 1950s. And yes, it's good enough to survive the comparison.

MAFIA II

Taking care of business

It's an '80s movie trick to bait the audience with some nudity early to keep them sticking around for the duration. *Mafia II* plays its hand early when main man Vito arrives at the apartment of a portly pal of his – only to find one of the two women his friend was schtupping the previous night half-nude.

From the waist down.

Teasingly she's walking away from you, but *Mafia II* is so much more than a cheap arse shot and a smattering of vintage Playboy magazines (which it has too).

Mafia II is a game of details. The way snow and crud builds up on your car when it's out in bad weather. The way hubcaps scatter away under the strain of a heavy corner. The plumes of rich white smoke that wrap around the wheels as you car squats under acceleration or locks up under brakes. The way even the tyres flex and compress as they absorb the weight of the game's hulking rides as they land from launching off kerbs.

And that's just the cars. We haven't even mentioned the suits, the period advertising and music or the changing seasons.

Our hands-on with *Mafia II* has left us with little but positive thoughts about this massively ambitious crime epic. Everything seems to have clicked into place in this oft-delayed project.

GETTING JIMMY WITH IT

Gamers who purchase a new copy of *Mafia II* on PS3 upon its release later this month will receive the first downloadable pack, "The Betrayal of Jimmy," for the price of on-the-house – via a voucher included with the game. It's a one-time use code though, so if you buy it second-hand you'll need to spring for the extra content out of your own wallet. "The Betrayal of Jimmy" pack will include new arcade-style missions, like assassinations and vehicle-based objectives, that will score you and place you on online leaderboards.

According to 2K, the "The Betrayal of Jimmy" pack is exclusive to PlayStation 3, and will be followed by a second, non-exclusive pack ("Jimmy's Vendetta") soon after.



"Nah, I'm just after some licourice ones"

The felony system, for instance, works like an absolute charm. In most open-world games law enforcement exists in two states; they're either ignoring you, or they're trying to kill you. Even the tiniest transgression will set them off like a sackful of starving badgers. *Mafia II* features a far, far deeper felony system than any you'd be used to.

Minor offences can be escaped with a caution, or perhaps a ticket. We triggered a scrap in the street with a random passer-by. A nearby flatfoot strode over and busted up the squabble with a stern warning. Small traffic crimes, like speeding and such, will simply result in ticket if you pull over and stop.

From what we gleaned, you'll have the option of taking these on the chin or talking/ bribing your way out of things. It certainly helps that some of the fuzz in *Mafia II* are as crooked as a dog's hind leg. We were pulled over at one stage after blitzing through several

intersections at light speed, but a little grease applied to the palm of John Justice saw him waive the fine and simply leave us to our own devious devices.

Start causing a major ruckus, however, and the cops will come down on you like a ton of bricks sculpted into a giant statue of Serpico. Their aggression ranges from wanting to arrest you to wanting to access your brain candies by opening your skull up like a piñata.

This is something they WILL do, if you don't give them enough credit. If *Mafia II* is anything, it's brutally and unflinchingly realistic. *Mafia II* is for gamers who like their consequences clear and their gaming deep and measured. *Mafia II* is for gamers who want their virtual worlds to obey the rules of the real one, for maximum immersion.

Massive car accidents will kill you: instantly. Rather than bring proceedings to a frustrating halt, however, it brings a kind of real danger to the vehicle sections. Driving a 1950s land whale at speeds that'd make a test pilot's scrotum shrivel would be an immensely dangerous activity. *Mafia II* makes sure it feels like exactly that. Even a moderate fender bender can botch your engine, although you can hop out and repair it. This is a game for players who delighted in *GTAIV*'s gritty new angle, not turned their noses up at it.

We'll have a review next issue. Expect good things. **Luke Reilly**

THEY SAY

"Players will easily become engaged in the game's cinematic, Hollywood-style experience"

WE SAY

We've had quite a bit of time this month to really thrash the preview code 2K provided and we're *hugely* impressed. This is grown-up gaming and it looks great.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INCOME

Wall surfing is just as rad as it sounds

Do not get to de choppah

Cole isn't afraid to give people watt for

INFO **FORMAT:** PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY | **DEVELOPER:** SUCKER PUNCH | **PLAYERS:** 1

INFAMOUS 2

PS3 + *inFamous 2* = ultimate power?

It takes conviction and character to fess up to past mistakes. During our closed doors session at this year's E3, Sucker Punch not only did that, but they also explained how they've identified previous errors and how that knowledge will help them to fashion a truly electrifying sequel.

Development director Chris Zimmerman went on the record to say, "We made some really dumb decisions in the last game, but we've managed to fix them. It was pretty early on that we knew what we weren't doing in *inFamous* that we needed to do in *inFamous 2*, but we had to tear a whole bunch of stuff up and put it back together."

He even went on to give us an insider's insight into the technical prowess of the ps3, saying, "In technical terms the biggest thing that we've done is migrate a much larger part of our code to run on the SPUs. The PS3 has this elaborate architecture where there's a whole bunch of different places you can have your code run and we had it all running in the slow part."

So, can this sequel be achieved on another console? Zimmerman is quick to dispel the myth; "If you look at games like *Uncharted 2*, that's a game you actually can't do on Xbox

no matter how clever you are, there's just more processing power on the PS3. *inFamous 2* is going to be the same way. You'll look at it and see that there's no way we could have done this game on something else."

In case you missed our reveal in last month's issue, here's a short catch up on the plot. A 'made-over' Cole MacGrath and his (fat, fairly useless) friend Zeke are at large in a new city called New Marais (think: New Orleans). Cole realises that he must take on his nemesis – the Beast – but he needs to lay low and evolve his powers to stand a chance. Unfortunately, he can't just take the movie option and beef up in a 30 second montage, as there's a local anti-super hero militia that want to kill him – or possibly hook him up to the mains and score free juice. We totally would.

Judging from the super moves we saw, Cole's mastery of electricity has jumped up a few notches. Homeboy harnesses more gigawatts than a Texas death-row prison. Where you and we leave a carbon footprint, Cole pounds his foot into the earth's arse every time he has to throw-down.

Noting our stunned faces, Zimmerman also hinted that Cole's powers could well extend

"You ain't nothin' but a hounddog Cole"

BERTRAND

FREEDOM AND SECURITY

The redneck anti-super hero league

beyond electricity. "Superpowers are the reason people want to play the game, and we want to give you more toys to play with. Why in the world would we not let you experience more variety in powers?"

Why indeed. Sure, Sucker Punch shocked us with *inFamous 2*'s amazing visual overhaul, but if they introduce a slew of exciting new elemental powers, they could just make our hair stand on end. **Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

"An immersive open-world action adventure that offers a more visceral, emotional and powerful take on the true superhero experience"

WE SAY

Keep two beady eyes on this sequel. If the new-look Cole causes you to cry fanboy tears, know that Sucker Punch says his design is by no means final.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE THING

THE PITCH

New city, new threads, new powers - same old arse-kicking fun. *Uncharted 2* may have a new visual rival.





INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RACING | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** SEPTEMBER 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI | **DEVELOPER:** CODEMASTERS | **PLAYERS:** 1-12

F1 2010

"There's nothing wrong with the car except that it's on fire"

THE PITCH

An open-wheeled odyssey that will have simulator sensibilities.



To all the Formula One fans pining for a decent F1 game – the drought may soon be over. As to whether this latest iteration will be any good; we'll just have to wait and see, but we can say that Codemasters certainly seems to have the right guys behind the wheel.

Senior producer Paul Jael is a respected member of Codemasters' racing studio, but he started out with the legendary Geoff Crammond on *Grand Prix 3*, and lead designer Stephen Hood played a major role in both *Psygnosis* and Sony's F1 titles. After meeting

them both, we're convinced of their passion for the sport and we reckon they'll recreate all 24 drivers and 12 teams from the 2010 season with meticulous attention to detail.

Speaking of ludicrous detail, Codemasters is wheeling out the EGO engine; the extremely capable graphics framework that was used on *DIRT*, *DIRT 2* and *GRID*. During the time spent in the pits, it seems the mechanical monkeys have bolted on one of the most complicated weather systems we've ever seen in a racing game. When rain falls, the track will slowly lose grip,

with some areas becoming precarious much quicker than others. Some trackside elements like trees can shelter the track, while lower ground and imperfections in the road surface will run a greater risk of puddling – which will have you booking a ticket for the aquaplane.

If the rain doesn't persist you can eventually start to see a 'dry line' emerge through the track – sticking to this provides more grip, deviating from it puts you back in spins-ville. Similarly, all tracks, regardless of weather, will evolve in terms of grip. At the beginning of a race weekend your times may be slower thanks to a virginal track surface; but by the end of it, when the track has become a trollop for tyres, any rubber laid down by previous drivers will offer you a bit more grip.

It's seemingly minor details like this, combined with the already proven visual clout of EGO that is making our anticipation levels shoot skyward like Mark Webber off a Lotus.

Adam Mathew

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** FIGHTING | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2011
DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROS. | **DEVELOPER:** NETHERREALM STUDIOS | **PLAYERS:** 1-2

MORTAL KOMBAT

Gory, gory what a helluva way to die...

When the original *Mortal Kombat* was released in 1992 it was viewed as being *obscenely* violent. True to form, this new *Mortal Kombat* game takes our preconception of what videogame violence is, breaks its spinal column, pops out its eyes for juju beans and plays skipping rope with its steaming entrails. We've played it, gentle reader, and it is the very portrait of ultra-violence.

The once homeless folks of Midway Chicago (the original custodians of the MK series) have changed their name to NetherRealm Studios since being absorbed by Warner Bros. and now continue to serve as the creative force behind this latest iteration.

In a move mirroring *Street Fighter 4*, Ed Boon is ditching the 3D plane in favour of recreating the feel of ye olde 2D MKs of the past. *Mortal Kombat* looks like a 'best of' mix tape – and if we had to put a finger on a time frame, we'd say it occurs during the events of games one through three. The demo on offer at E3 included some memorable stages that



remain true to the original source material. For example; during a fight near the acid vats we saw victims being dunked in and out, the pit had other fighters battling in the background and in the evil forest the trees were cheerfully devouring people.

With regards to fighters, we saw a bunch of old favourites doing battle, including; Johnny Cage, Kung Lao, Mileena, Nightwolf, Raiden, Reptile, Shang Tsung, Sektor, Scorpion and Sub-Zero. We were also privy to a 'fatalities reel' that wasn't released to the public (and, at the time of writing, still hasn't).

Take the tip from us; you haven't seen 3D models with innards this accurate before. We know this because the game zooms in for 'x-ray' shots when you heavy attack someone – and we also know it because some fighters got slowly sliced in half, dismembered or had their faces bitten clean off.

The action in this looks super-tight and the

loving attention to detail has us overdosing on nostalgia. The only hitch we can see? Our stupid, backwards classification system. Fingers crossed.

Adam Mathew

THEY SAY

"Mature presentation, reinvented 2D fighting mechanic and the best, most gruesome fatalities ever!"

WE SAY

Bahumbug! We want to have access to all 63 fighters from the previous games. What? We're not being excessively greedy here. You are.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

THE PITCH

A 'gore-i-ous' re-telling of the events of the original *Mortal Kombat* games.



SCIENCE FACTION

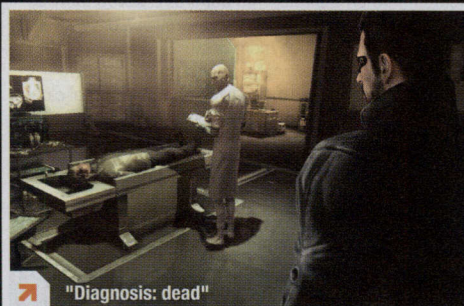
Human augmentation's happening right now, and it's not just limited to replacing limbs, hearts and ears. The coolest one we've heard of? In March last year, Jerry Jalava, a software developer in Finland, lost a finger in a motorcycle accident. Rather than leaving a gap, or having a purely aesthetic digit in its place, he instead had a USB flash drive implemented into his prosthetic finger. The future is now!

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION RPG | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2011
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS | **DEVELOPER:** EIDOS MONTREAL | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

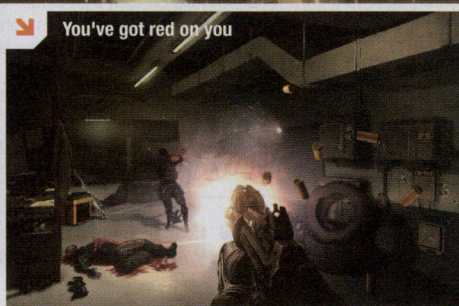
Bionically shocking



"Diagnosis: dead"



"When I said you can't wear sunnies at night..."



You've got red on you

THE PITCH

Men turned into robots, who can become invisible but also have arms that spew bullets. Like if Arnie was a ninja AND a Terminator.



Widespread human despair and innovative high technology go hand in hand – think of *Red Faction: Guerrilla*, *Singularity* (reviewed this issue), *BioShock* – where the genius ideas of the cool tech you play with is in direct contrast to the shitty situation the protagonist's in. The third in the *Deus Ex* series, which is also a prequel, follows this inverse equation of cool stuff meaning extreme civil unrest.

Welcome to the future, 2027. You're filling the shoes of Adam Jensen, who provides security for a biotech corporation who make mechanical augmentations. Think robot arms that not only provide greater strength but also the opportunity to incorporate a brutal machine gun, as well as various other body parts that leave the bionic eye looking like an experiment made in Year 10 science.

After an attack on his employer, Jensen is left in pretty bad shape and undergoes radical augmentation to save his life. Thus, intrigue. Who attacked his employer and why? Who is Adam Jensen? Finding these answers won't just mean shooting your way through the bad guys, as you'll be offered multiple ways to tackle problems using different upgrades divided into four classes: Stealth, Combat, Technology and Social.

So, while you could go in to a scenario armed to the hilt, the better option might be to sneak your way past the security camera or just hack it, then sweet talk someone into giving you a passcode before slipping past a guard by turning invisible. Or you could engage your heat-sensing skill and punch through a wall with your metal arms, snapping the guard's neck.

Conversations twist and weave in a traditional RPG style where you'll be given various choices to try and work your way to the outcome you want. We don't expect these choices to be static, but will rely on the state of your 'Social' skill. Since physical augmentations spearhead the gameplay, we're curious to know if Adam Jensen's looks and attractiveness will alter conversation choices, or can change the tone and timbre of his voice in order to be more persuasive.

Though it's primarily a first-person affair, the viewpoint shifts to a third person perspective for cool takedowns and when

taking cover. Extreme physical attacks, such as punching through a wall, just make more sense in a third-person view, and they look damn cool.

Deus Ex is a series that relies on its style as much as a solid narrative, and series creators, Warren Spector and Harvey Smith, aren't involved this time around. Development's being handled by the relatively new Eidos Montréal who promise to stay faithful to the series. But we're not worried. From what we've seen it's definitely on track to reel fans back in for more and attract newcomers to its intelligently portrayed dystopian world. Invisible men with machineguns for arms? Tick. **Paul Taylor**

THEY SAY

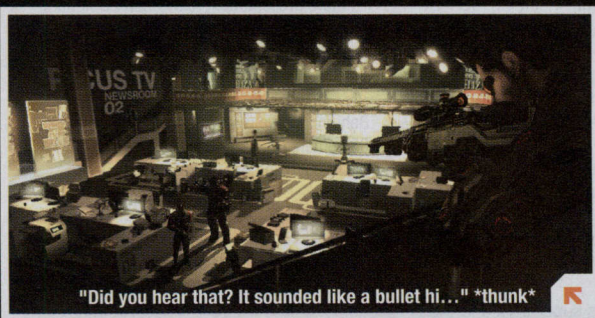
"The decisions you take and the choices you make will be the only things that can determine mankind's future"

WE SAY

Deus Ex is one of those few series that have kept their fans in raptures for a decade over its intelligence and depth of gameplay, but we're confident this will raise the bar.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING



"Did you hear that? It sounded like a bullet hi..." *think*



So chunky you could carve it

INCOMING

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2012
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | **DEVELOPER:** VALHALLA GAME STUDIOS | **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

DEVIL'S THIRD

The devil is in the details

THE PITCH

Stylish death delivered by shooters in snake-skin clothing



Though it may sound like an educational game where Satan teaches you fractions, *Devil's Third* is in fact the first title made by producer Tomonobu Itagaki since leaving Team Ninja. Under the new banner of Valhalla Game Studios, Itagaki is up to his old gore-filled shenanigans in this blood-soaked third-person shooter. His personal design goal? To replicate "the direct feeling of killing."

Not a game for your nan then.

Plot details are a little hard to come by at this point, but it has been revealed that the world of *Devil's Third* is suffering from the effects of the Kessler Syndrome Theory. The

basic gist of it is that when all of the space junk in our atmosphere begins crashing into one another, it'll cause super-heated debris to meteor down at earth. As a side-effect, all of these missile-shaped chunks will wreak havoc with the early-warning systems that usually prevent the international community from flinging nukes at one another.

How this disturbing situation relates to gameplay is still a bit of a mystery, but knowing Itagaki we imagine it's there to provide an excuse for balletic mid-air death, gratuitous dismemberment and boobs. Lots of boobs.

Itagaki kept his cards close to his chest,

THEY SAY

"Close combat with swords along with gravity-defying shootouts that result in a beautiful ballet of blood and bullets."

WE SAY

Honestly, we're watching the footage again and getting flashbacks of *WET* here. We just hope that this doesn't turn out to be another soggy sandwich of style over substance.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SHOOTER | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** OCTOBER 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: EA | **DEVELOPER:** DICE | **PLAYERS:** 1-24

MEDAL OF HONOR

Dishonourable discharge?

THE PITCH

A mesh of *Modern Warfare 2* and *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* multiplayer, handled by DICE, taking the "alleged" killer aspects of each title and mashing them together for the best of both worlds.



Considering all the lofty praise the multiplayer beta for this revamp of the *Medal of Honor* franchise has received, we were pretty psyched to grab some Intel on it ourselves. On paper, it sounds like a gamer's wet dream. The fast paced action of *Modern Warfare 2* combined with team objectives of *Bad Company 2*, all neatly woven together by those maestros at DICE. What's not to love? Unfortunately, at this stage, a bit.

Since it's a beta, we'll take it with a grain of salt, but we didn't love what we saw. Visually it was decidedly average at best, and maps and weapon unlocks support individual play and extended camping. By giving you the bare essentials in your arsenal, it encourages players to hide in dark corners and shoot you in the back. Even the sniper class starts with iron sights!

Where there's smoke, there's firing



For sale: one car, slightly on fire. \$100 o.n.o.

Of the two maps, Kabul City Ruins was used for 12 vs. 12 deathmatch, and felt a little claustrophobic. It also suffered from many of the gripes we described above. Helmund Valley, on the other hand, was team objective based, with a single tank the only controllable vehicle, and automated air-strikes required to finish the mission. This had its own problems. Finding enough players to populate the map was a hurdle, and most of them just concentrated on the individual accolades deathmatch supplies.

With several months before release, we hope that DICE gives the multiplayer an decent overhaul because right now it feels like it was hastily slapped together and was a tad "meh". But that's what betas are for. **Dave Kozicki**

THEY SAY

"Players will step into the boots of Tier One operators... [in the] hostile battlefield conditions of present day Afghanistan"

WE SAY

There's still time, but we were surprisingly underwhelmed by the beta. We expected an evolution, not just the same old "camp/kill/lone wolf" mentality.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING



INCOMING

MEALS ON WHEELS

Some of the new selectable vehicles in the game include Reaper (Mr. Grimm's motorbike), Roadboat (looks like a Mitsubishi Eclipse), Death Warrant (a 2009 Ford Mustang), Vermin (a rodent catcher van), an '80s Chevrolet Monte Carlo, Meat Wagon (a 1959 Cadillac ambulance).

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RACING | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2011
DISTRIBUTOR: EAT SLEEP PLAY | **DEVELOPER:** SONY | **PLAYERS:** 1-16

TWISTED METAL

You're gonna DIE, clown...

Coulrophobia is the psychological term that describes the unreasoning, repaint-your-pants fear of clowns. If you do get nervous around face painted folk who know how to make stabbing weapons out of balloon animals, then this is probably *not* your game.

Instead, we recommend you go rent yourself a copy of Stephen King's *It*. Zero clowns in that one.

The poster-psycho of this *Twisted Metal* is once again Sweet Tooth the killer clown, and this is a sequel that focuses heavily on multiplayer combat. We're told that this circus will offer 16-player online game modes, fairybread and some four-player split-screen for some proper, old-school mayhem.

The first gameplay we got to grips with during E3 was Nuke Mode, a truly unhinged Capture The Flag affair that has you dragging bodies behind your car instead of flags. Honestly, Capture The Meatbag would be a better way to describe it. During the lunacy there are two teams – The Dolls (led by *Twisted Metal: Black*'s Dollface) and, of course, Sweet Tooth (with his lustrous flaming locks) will lead The Clowns.

The objective is to pull down the rival team's towering statue and the process is a bit more involved than just bringing in a wrecking ball. The first phase of your mission is to infiltrate your opponent's base, to avoid the fire of their defensive turrets and kidnap their team leader. Once you drag his sorry carcass back to your own missile silo, phase two can begin.

With the enemy general inside your compound perimeter the building will begin

to spew fire and transform. Keep your nemesis trussed up long enough and you can sacrifice them to this demonic silo. Your sadism will be duly rewarded with a nuke launch at your enemies. In a cool twist, this slow moving missile is controlled by the capturing player and the enemy can save themselves by either blasting it from the sky or by capping the "pilot" of the projectile.

Judging from the macabre absurdity seen in our demo, *Twisted Metal* is staying true to its irreverent dark humoured roots. According to series creator and returning designer David Jaffe, the team is aiming for the American equivalent of our PG rating. Before you pooh-pooh that, we should point out that such a design decision would put it in line with *Twisted Metal 2*'s humorous style, rather than the John Wayne Gacy inspired *Black*.

There are some more titbits we managed to uncover too; vehicles are now interchangeable between racers, the number of available special moves has jumped up from one to two and there have been serious hints that suggest a great deal of driver and vehicle customisation. While there is still some mystery to *Twisted Metal*'s full feature list, we're confident that when the time comes to pull open the ribbon it'll jack-in-the-box us right upside the head.

Adam Mathew

THEY SAY

"No other title has *Twisted Metal*'s perfect mix of dark humor and personality along with massive destruction"

WE SAY

Send in the clowns. Those laffy, daffy clowns. Send in the soulful and doleful, SCHMOLTZ, by the bowlful. Clowns. You know, just in case you've been finding sleeping too easy.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

You're not standing in our way of going to clown college



THE PITCH

A *Twisted Metal* remake that picks and chooses the best parts of the previous titles and infuses it with more great ideas.



Can't sleep. Clown'll shoot me. Can't sleep...



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** FIGHTING | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** SEPTEMBER 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | **DEVELOPER:** THQ SAN DIEGO | **PLAYERS:** 1-4

WWE ALL STARS

"I'm gonna come at you like a spider monkey!"

For those of you who think that WWE and its wrestlers are already larger-than-life – you ain't seen nothin' yet. Why, just one look at these screens and you'd be forgiven for thinking that Cena and The Rock had been chugging Hulk-hormone milkshakes. But as ripped as they may be, it may surprise you to know that the true super-sizing in *WWE All Stars* has actually occurred in the gameplay department.

The *SmackDown* titles are to *All Stars* what *NBA Live* is to *NBA Jam*. Which is to say: if you personally never gave a crap about wrestling, you might still want to check out this exaggerated extravaganza. All of your actions in *All Stars* scream the wrestling equivalent of 'boomshakalaka'; your movesets are more powerful, you jump higher off turnbuckles and you ragdoll your opponent around like a red-

headed stepchild. That, coupled with the 'roided redesigns of the wrestlers, makes a bout in *All Stars* feel like an epic showdown between two superheroes.

The project is in great hands too, with *All Stars* being tackled by THQ San Diego, a team comprised of ex-Midway employees who worked on the TNA wrestling games. Lead producer Sal Divita showed us the ropes of this title at E3 and told us that the combat mechanics will be more similar to a fighting game; faster and more combo-friendly.

The team obviously still want to retain the wrestling roots however, with plenty of devastating grapple attacks and brutal finishers (that Sal unleashed upon us – while laughing). During our merciless thrashing we noted that the suspension in the floor acts like a trampoline,

THEY SAY

"*WWE All Stars* will encompass a fluid, intuitive and original gameplay style, creating a highly competitive environment"

WE SAY

"Hey Sal, can you teach me how to..."

"*Thunk* "...okay, good hit, but how do I..."

"*Crunch*. You'll need a training montage for this one."

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

THE PITCH

Super-sized wrestling superstars in over-the-top fisticuffs.



which opens your victim up to bounce juggling.

Along with the brutal move animations and sickening thunks, *All Stars* feels even more impactful than its predecessors thanks to a player damage mode that issues bruises, scratches or massive welts to the receiver. Even if you don't buy into the whole 'it's *Melrose Place* with violence' pitch of wrestling, we still think there's plenty of arcade addiction here to lure non-believers into the ring. **A Adam Mathew**

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** MUSIC | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBA 2011
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | **DEVELOPER:** Q ENTERTAINMENT | **PLAYERS:** 1

CHILD OF EDEN

God help your eyeballs if this goes 3D

We here at *OPS* are huge fans of anything masterminded by Tetsuya Mizuguchi. For those of you who missed it, his last game was *Rez*, a synesthetic mishmash of *Space Harrier*, mainframe computer hacking, fully-sick trance music and the kaleidoscopic images of a Russian painter. Okay, look. We never said we *understood* it – we just said we liked it.

Child of Eden is the spiritual, next-gen successor to *Rez* and its gameplay elements also revolve around shooting various targets which create melodic sounds upon their destruction. The 'Eden' in the title refers to the artificial intelligence construct that you had to navigate in the last game. Your main objective in *Child of Eden* is to save Project Lumi from a virus attack that threatens to destroy Eden.

Once the virus is destroyed, Project Lumi will then reproduce a human personality. So yeah, the end-game is to help Skynet have a baby. It looks like once again we'll be playing this for the phat beats and eye candy treats – not the plot.

THE PITCH

Something to do with... computers, along with rad interactive rhythms.



"Dude, the controller is talking to me again"

This time around, Mizuguchi hopes to integrate a brand new element into his experimental synesthesia: motion. Ordinarily, you can choose between using a lock-on function (similar to what went on in *Rez*'s gameplay), or you can opt to have a constantly firing machine gun-type weapon. Using Move you will be able to aim using the two separate motion controllers, while the various buttons are used to scroll through your psychedelic arsenal of weapons.

Disturbingly, just like *Rez* we'll also be given the option to... "use additional controllers" to "provide external vibration effects" during the gameplay experience. No word yet as to whether Ubisoft are going to make another dedicated Trance Vibrator available. We were absolutely going to ask them at the crowded press conference, but we didn't know how to phrase the question in a way that didn't make us sound like eager perverts.

Unfortunately, these static screens don't do this game justice. We saw it explode on a screen the size of Texas and we can't wait to kiss the sky one more time. **A Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

"A multi-sensory shooter that will send players diving into a kaleidoscopic matrix of synchronized music and mind-blowing visuals"

WE SAY

The beautiful sound and vision we saw was extremely impressive. We just hope the 'touch' they're planning to integrate is the good one, not the bad touch.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: RPG | EXPECTED RELEASE: MARCH 2011
 DISTRIBUTOR: SQUARE ENIX | DEVELOPER: UBISOFT | PLAYERS: 1- MILLIONS

FINAL FANTASY XIV

The obsession continues, online



"That's what you're wearing? Into battle? Leather underpants?"



If you want blood (he's got it)

THE PITCH

A glorious MMORPG in a land where ears are pointy, crabs are plentiful and chocobos abound.



The *Final Fantasy* series has become the gaming equivalent of the pink Energizer bunny – laced with fluff, gender-ambiguous and the sucker will *not* stop going.

Fortunately, during those long years the *Final Fantasy* games have been consistently evolving and surprising us with new gameplay innovations, memorable characters and visual escalations that are all-out ocular assaults.

Once again the franchise is attempting to push the boundaries and conquer new targets. In this case, the boundary is to have the first massively multiplayer online *Final Fantasy* to be released worldwide on a Sony console – and the target Squeenix has is every waking minute of your social life. Note: yes, we know that *Final Fantasy XI* was on PS2 – but it never saw release in the PAL territories.

This new fantasy takes place in the beautiful, expansive land of Hydaelyn – a realm that enjoys a mix of sci-fi tech and classic fantasy elements. From what we saw there were five races (humans, elves, gnomes, giants and cat-people), we had four “disciplines” to choose from (War, Magic, Agricultural or Craftsman) and there

were giant enemy crabs that we could attack for massive damage.

The aforementioned crustacean conflict took place during a brief four-player, dungeon crawling quest. When we positioned our cursor over a spell, a portion of our spellcaster stamina glowed to indicate how much the attack would drain our stamina. From what we could gather, stamina has a hard cap that regenerates fairly quickly but is engineered to prevent us from chain-queuing our most bad-arse.

Interestingly, the focus is on weapons and skills this time – the game does not feature experience points or a levelling system. Whenever we smote crabs and other dungeon denizens we accumulated points towards our “Physical Level” – which seemed to govern attributes such as HP, MP, Intelligence and Strength. All in all, the battle system felt very reminiscent of *FFXI*; considered, methodical but with a much more user-friendly interface.

With regards to visuals, we have to register our concerns. The landscapes themselves looked amazing; the labyrinthine bridges and pontoons in the coastal town of “Limsa Lominsa” fairly

begged to be explored. Like-wise, the character models looked sharp, hinted at a considerable degree of customisation and featured a swag of emotive animations for every occasion (except for ‘I’m considering stalking you’).

No, our gripe lies with the 3D glasses mode we were forced to endure (on three inter-linked screens, no less). The games UI setup doesn’t lend itself well to depth of field. You’ve got all your mini-menus right up in your face and the process of selecting “distant” baddies results in this weird “jumping back and forth through planes” effect that really irritates the eye.

Thankfully, we were told that the 3D is only experimental for now. Beyond that hiccup, we didn’t see anything other than great potential in this title. Sure, it’s ‘insta-divorce’ on a disc, but we must have this. **Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

“The first truly worldwide *Final Fantasy* MMORPG to be released on a Sony system. Forgive us our past sins against the PAL people”

WE SAY

The PAL people accept your apology as long as your 3D stereoscopic is fashioned into something that won’t kerb-stomp our retinas into quivering submission.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
 LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION RPG | EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: RELIC ENTERTAINMENT | PLAYERS: 1-TBC

WARHAMMER 40K: SPACE MARINE

Game over, man. Game over

THEY SAY

"While we have a four-person party system – that you can only play as one character in – we can't confirm online co-op at this time"

WE SAY

Oh, come on now. It's totally got four player co-op in it. Now all we need Relic to 'not confirm' is that this has a glorious amount of Ork gore.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING

THE PITCH

Cutting a swathe through large clusters of bloodthirsty Orks. Viva la violence!



Assuming you know nothing of tabletop games and the joy that is to be found in painting a small miniature's pants blue (instead of silver); *Space Marines* are the bad-ass characters from Games Workshop's Warhammer 40,000.

Unlike James Cameron's wussy xenomorph fodder, these space marines are elite human soldiers enhanced to superhuman levels through genetic tampering, surgical alteration, and hypnotic indoctrination. They wake up in the morning and piss excellence.

The plot outlined for *Space Marine* concerns an Ork invasion of an Imperial Forge World; a planet covered by factories responsible for producing weapons and armour

for the Imperium of Mankind. Now the Orks, in case you weren't aware, are just like 'orks' but they pack stabbing weapons called 'choppas' and they also field a number of insane ranged weapons and vehicles too. Interestingly, they are convinced that the red vehicles they build go faster. Out-smarting them should be easy.

As the barbaric Orks tear the planet to shreds it's up to you to take control of a squad of four space marines and investigate. The game will be of an action RPG persuasion and your squad consists of an Assault Marine, a Tactical Marine, a Sergeant and a Devastator Marine. At your alien-killing fingertips are the usual suspects; power swords, chain swords, hammers, bolters and heavy bolters.

A tour of duty in *Space Marine* will consist of fast-paced melee and shooter combat against mobs of enemies in both tight corridors and large, open environments. Upgrades are earned for each marine as the game progresses, allowing you to customise the squad and tailor it towards specific Ork-smashing tactics (or personal favourite power-up: bitchin' jetpacks).

From what we can see, it appears that you can issue orders to the entire squad, but you're only 'piloting' one marine per mission. Being so early on in its development, a lot of *Space Marine* is still shrouded in secrecy. We like what we've seen so far though and we'll be keeping two eyes out for it. **A Adam Mathew**

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: RACING | EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA 2011
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: UBISOFT REFLECTIONS | PLAYERS: 1-4

DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

Apparently your dream car is just that



THE PITCH

Astral-projection meets sideways action in this righteous Reflections racer



Right after belting about *Gran Turismo 5* in a Dodge Challenger at E3 we immediately moved on to *Driver: San Francisco* and realised a very important fact. A muscle car's natural environment isn't on a racetrack nailing lines – it's in a city, powersliding through a busy intersection or launching down a San Franciscan hill. Disagree? Go watch *Bullitt*. We'll wait for you.

Driver: San Francisco's narrative kicks

off a few months after the events of *Driv3r* and focuses once again on John Tanner and his nemesis, Charles Jericho. After escaping incarceration and hijacking a police truck, Jericho soon orchestrates a head-on showdown with Tanner – literally. Our hero loses a game of chicken with Jericho's truck and the wheelman gets wheeled away in a coma. Somewhat controversially, the game then takes place in Tanner's coma dream.

But what a drool-worthy range of cars you can 'Shift' to. You'll get access to over 120 fully damageable, licensed vehicles. We scored ourselves the following rides; RUF CT3, Mercedes SLR McLaren, Dodge Challenger, Dodge Charger ('69 and '09 versions), Pagani Zonda, Lancia Stratos, Shelby Cobra, Shelby GT 500, Aston Martin V12 Vantage and even a DeLorean (which still needed roads). Nobody drives a crud car in the entire city.

We've already made mention of the extremely robust multiplayer mode in last month's issue, but one thing we didn't have space for was the Film Director mode. The only thing we love more than fangling around at 60 frames per second is editing such awesomeness into a classy, rip-roaring replay for our mates.

With 300-odd kilometres of road and a bunch of suburbs purpose-tuned for specific car-types, we cannot wait to play this game and record our radness. **A Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

"All the best bits of the original game, minus the sub-par out-of-car sections. Oh, and we threw in existentialism too"

WE SAY

Handles beautifully. Visually, it needs a bit of polish at this stage. The final piece of the puzzle is coming up with a believable coma story that doesn't put us in one.

VERDICT

BAD SHAPE | NEEDS WORK | GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD | GREAT STUFF | SURE-THING



WELCOME TO THE CLAN

WORDS: PAUL TAYLOR

Nearly nine million copies of *Assassin's Creed II* later this is still the sequel no-one saw coming. Ezio Auditore returns to your console to fight for the future of an entire city. Good thing he has some help.

ASSASSIN'S CREED BROTHERHOOD



Ubisoft Montreal seems to have the best pair of ears in the industry, and always embrace the spirit of Charles Darwin when it comes to designing games. It listened to fans of the first game when constructing *Assassin's Creed II*, getting rid of repetitive side quests, pointless travel across empty landscape and tweaking the combat system. If it was outmoded, it evolved.

But it went further than that, giving the player the chance to put their stamp on the wide open-world at Villa Auditore, Monteriggioni. For *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, it's going further again, making the combat more fluid, paying even more attention to the story and introducing a brand new mechanic while keeping the fun parts intact. Plus, they've even constructed a multiplayer mode, which OPS briefly saw a few months ago, though we had few details at the time. Ultimately, *Brotherhood* represents remarkable progress, since *Assassin's Creed II* only came out a year ago.

The new locale is Rome, the heart of Italy in the 16th Century, but it's been left to rot by the ruling power of the Templars and Borgia forces. "At the beginning of the 16th Century which is where the game starts, Rome is very different than what we know of it today," says Vincent Pontbriand, the producer of *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*. "The city is practically in ruins and the wealth and power is concentrated in the Vatican. The leaders of Rome and Italy do not share the wealth, nor do they invest in the city. The Templars rule the Vatican and have literally created an impenetrable fortress of it."



“The players that **take the upper hand** will win fights”

O BROTHER

Brotherhood's opening is the end of its predecessor. Borgia troops are storming Monteriggioni, and after scuttling out of bed,

Ezio leaps across rooftops and on to his horse on a breakneck ride through the compound under heavy fire as buildings crumble around Ezio, and petrified citizens scamper to safety.

Leaping off his steed, up and over a few beams Ezio's on top of the villa's walls where he has to destroy the siege towers that Borgia's troops are slowly rolling in towards the villa, using cannons that are mounted on the walls. It's a simple affair, blasting at the wooden panels on the storeys-tall towers before they eventually crumble, their beams splintering out like liquid from a burst balloon. A misdirected cannon ball sends troops skyward, plumes of dirt shooting upward around them.

Some troops have already made it onto the wall, and Ezio scrambles to where they're taking up offensive positions. He's handily pitched above them by means of a merchandise lift on the apex of two walls, where he promptly jumps down and uses one of the unsuspecting troops as a mattress to soften his landing. After appropriating a sword, Ezio begins casually decimating the half dozen or so troops – the Papal forces, some of the most vicious you'll meet – on the walls (see 'Sniper

on the Roof'). As Patrick Plourde, Ubisoft Montreal's lead game designer says, the team's motto is “strike first, strike fast” when it comes to waving pointy objects in other people's faces.

“We want the player to take the offensive,” says Plourde. “To achieve this, we are giving the player new moves and mechanics (like the kick, combo strings, linking range and melee attacks, etc.) to quickly take care of multiple opponents. To raise the pace, the new fight system now has AI that is more aggressive... The players that take the upper hand will win fights – and get rewarded, both viscerally and visually.”

He's not wrong. Time your attacks just right and you'll do a rough tracheotomy on a guard, or use the back of their skull as a handy resting place for a bullet, as Ezio now uses his gun for finishing foes when he combines multiple attacks at the right moment. He'll also disarm an enemy, using their weapon against them as one trooper found out when his face met the blunt end of his sledgehammer.

After the fight on the wall, Rodrigo Borgia's son Cesare appears at the villa gates, taunting Ezio and surrounded by his troops. Uncle Mario lies at his feet. “Cesare is commanding, fearless, cocky, a fighter, and an army man,” says Pontbriand. “[He's your] true nemesis, [representing] the biggest challenge that Ezio has faced to date.”

Cesare points a gun at Mario, but the camera cuts away and as we hear the shot fire out, Ezio plummets from the rooftop.

Cut forward four years to 1503, and

MEET CESARE BORGIA

The real Borgia was the son of Pope Alexander VI and his long-term mistress Vannozza dei Cattanei. Yes. The child of the most popular abstinent man on the planet. We're hazy on the mumbo-jumbo that prevents priests from procreating, but clearly they did things a little differently back then.

WE BUILT THIS CITY

“After getting feedback from our players, one of the most surprisingly satisfying experiences in *Assassin's Creed II* was upgrading the Auditore stronghold at Monteriggioni and watching the environment evolve accordingly,” says Pontbriand. “For *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, we wanted to extend the property upgrade system in a logical and exciting direction. This time around, Rome is the new Monteriggioni.”

“To align the people of Rome to his cause and to assemble a force strong enough, Ezio will invest in the city and bring back the wealth to its people. Players investing their hard-earned money in Rome will see the fruit of their actions and be able to unlock many features, such as factions, and missions. The player will get to see Rome evolve and embrace the Renaissance based on their in-game investments. As a feature, this is fully integrated in the storyline and the player will see Rome and Ezio progress simultaneously throughout the game.”

ASSASSIN'S CREED BROTHERHOOD

Multiplayer: hazardous to your (character's) health



Another feature new to *Brotherhood* is combat on horseback



a number of white-hooded assassins are clambering the coliseum. The view from up top is spectacular. It's from here that you'll begin building your new empire.

BAM BAM, POW POW

It's a lot to take in: revised combat structure, merchandise lifts for rapid ascent, and the horse (see 'The Equine-iser'). There's one more, bigger new concept in the single player campaign: the brotherhood of assassins that will help Ezio overthrow the tyrants of Rome. Pontbriand breaks down the structure for us.

"As Ezio progresses throughout the story,

“No matter how keen your recruits are, they need to be trained”

he chooses certain characters to join his brotherhood. As he recruits new novice assassin members, Ezio will be able to send them on assignments. As they perform assignments, the novice assassins will gain experience and will progress to become master assassins.

These assignments will be given by Ezio using a unique animus interface.”

These 'certain characters' are fellow citizens that are working against the Borgia. Only having one assassin means you'll be able to call one action in at a time, and you'll have to wait for a period before calling that person in again. Having more members in the brotherhood allows for multiple takedowns, or being able to call for help more frequently.

No matter how keen your recruits are, they need to be trained in order to be effective. Thus, Ezio can send them off on missions throughout Europe to build up their skills, so they will be able to wield better weapons, and also be more versatile. We doubt that you'd

actively control your trainees whilst they're out; making the player do that for each recruit would get old, fast. The most important part of this training is that when they're back at your disposal, they're going

to be able to do the job you set for them. Else they could most likely die, and bring unwanted attention.

"Ezio will be able to customise his assassins and give them specific weapons," continues Pontbriand. "When they are not on assignments, Ezio will be able to call his assassins from anywhere and at anytime to help him complete his mission."



ROME-ING AROUND

Out of the theories we had in the *OPS* office about the next *Assassin's* locations – our favourite was the French revolution towards the end of the 18th Century – we didn't pick Rome. So, why here, why now? Pontbriand explains, "As in the previous games in the franchise, we wanted to make sure that we chose a critical moment in history; a place of significance, dynamism and renewal."

"Rome in the 1500s was considered the centre of the world. The religious and political power of Italy was concentrated in Rome. At the beginning of the 15th Century, Rome had not yet entered the Italian Renaissance and was behind cities such as Florence and Venice. In *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, Ezio will play a major in bringing the Renaissance to Rome."

"In terms of scope, Rome is the biggest city ever created in an *Assassin's Creed* game and is the richest city in terms of architecture and landmarks (Coliseum, Pantheon, Castel San Angelo, etc.). At the beginning of the 16th Century, Rome has about 2000 years of history and has seen many civilisations rise and fall under its rule. Rome offers a variety of architectural types: antique, medieval and Renaissance architecture. There will be five major districts in Rome – Vatican, Downtown, Tiber, Country, Antique. Each will have its own personality and will cover a huge area."



Yes, you will actually be able to do this

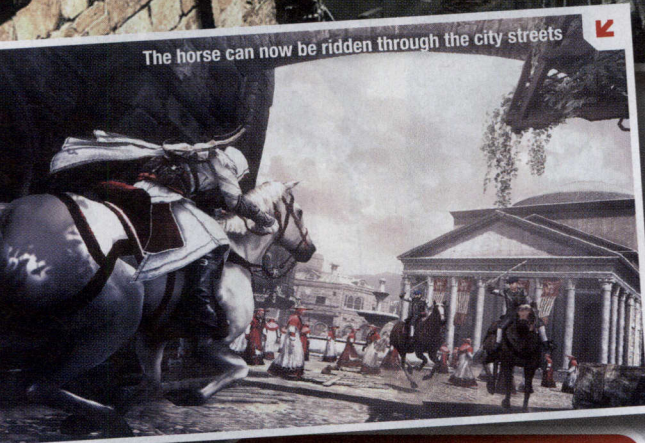


The brotherhood come to help Ezio in a BAM



“He’s handily pitched above them by means of a merchandise lift on the apex of two walls.”

The horse can now be ridden through the city streets



THE EQUINE-ISER

We’ve only seen a snapshot of the horse so far, and it was galloping through the rapidly disintegrating Villa Auditeore. “The horse in *Assassin’s Creed* and *Assassin’s Creed II* was a fun gameplay element but its use and specific features weren’t fully optimised,” admits Pontbriand.

“It was a fun means of transport with certain restrictions such as being confined to the outer city limits and allowing only assassinations of guards on foot.

“This time around, our objective is to exploit the full potential of the horse and make it a core and fun component of the game that players will be able to use strategically in their missions or while free-roaming. For *Assassin’s Creed Brotherhood*, players will be able to venture inside the walls of the city and gallop down the streets of Rome. Not only will they be able to go into the city, but we are developing new features that players will be able to use while being on the horse.”

You’ll be able to leave it to its own devices whilst you’re riding it so that you can plan your next move – or assassination. Plus, enemies on horseback can be attacked in what the team calls a ‘joust-like fashion’, or you can use the crossbow and other ranged weapons. More than a one-trick pony, it also comes in handy for making a fast getaway. That’s a real beauty.

We saw this in action in a later stage of the game where Ezio’s hit squad were at the peak of their training and ability, and it’s a dynamic mechanic that can be used anywhere rather than in specific spots and moments in time, though limited as to not be open to total abuse. While remaining anonymous and unseen by enemy eyes, Ezio targets a guard he needs removing and calls in one of the guild, in what’s called a Brotherhood Assisted Move, or BAM for short. “Depending on the weapon Ezio equipped them with, they will fight differently,” continues Pontbriand. “If Ezio equips them with crossbow, they will shoot from a distance, if they have swords, they will fight in close combat.”

As Ezio moved towards a church for his main target, he gets a member of the brotherhood to remove a guard from a rooftop. The assassin appears from nowhere, grabs the guard and is gone again. It’s almost comically quick and understated.

Inside the church, we can see a handful of the brotherhood positioned neatly on the

“The assassin appears from nowhere, grabs the guard and is gone again”

rafters, guards surrounding what looks like a bishop; your target. Rather than fight the guards himself and risk losing the bish, Ezio lets out a quick whistle and raises a clenched fist. The guild unleashes a storm of arrows on the guards, who crumple to the floor. As the bishop’s turning around to see what happened, he begins yelling at Ezio who’s already aiming his crossbow. The bolt fires and his target’s in a heap.

Back outside and more guards are waiting. Another signal and Ezio’s would-be destroyers are blanketed in smoke bombs, allowing him to make a hasty getaway.

Throughout this whole exercise, Ezio’s only bagged one person although he’s sent the order to kill and confound about a dozen more. While the powers of the Brotherhood were greatly exaggerated for the purpose of the demo, it’s still a stunning display of what’s possible.

KNIVES OUT

The single player campaign’s received a lot of attention, yet Ubisoft Montreal felt that they weren’t doing their job if they didn’t incorporate a multiplayer aspect. Their justification for it isn’t just that they should put one in there, but that they thought they could bring something new to the competitive space whilst retaining their vision for the story, and tying it all into the *Assassin’s* universe.

Stephane Baudet, the Creative Director of the Multiplayer component in *Brotherhood*, explains that the Abstergo facility you see at the beginning of *Assassin’s Creed II* is the place where they’re training Templars recruits to wipe out the Assassins. The maps you play on are Abstergo’s model of historical locations, mostly build from those in the single player story. Expect to see Florence, San Donato and Rome.

“The maps also feature new interactive elements that have been created specifically to support the intense free running or help players to chase each other like the ‘chase breakers’,” continues Baudet. “Chase breakers are implemented in the level design and are specific objects – beams, corner swings, etc. – that once triggered are destroyed to

break the free-running path of the person running after you, giving you better chances of escaping. Another example of a chase breaker is a gate closing behind you while you are being pursued, leaving your predator behind you and allowing you to escape so you can pursue your own target.”

They work well in the only mode Montreal is talking about at this stage, Wanted, where you play as both hunter and hunted. Everyone has a target, and is targeted by someone else; so the person you’re chasing won’t be chasing you. As you get better, you might have multiple people trying to claim your scalp.

At this stage the mode shares a few conventions with shooters, such as a ‘perks’ system that will allow you to confuse your killer, such as ‘Disguise’ that makes you look like another character, ‘Speedboost’ which does what you think it does. The gun also gets a run in multi, but the emphasis is firmly

ASSASSIN'S CREED BROTHERHOOD



Getting into the swing of things



Cannon Ezio, come on, come on...




Fan-tastic

on close quarters encounters. One of the coolest abilities is 'Morph' where all nearby NPCs will look like you do. A smart player will use the crowd to their advantage, and that's an aspect *Assassin's* players will know from the previous two titles. Having a crowd that can be used as a tool creates more tension, especially in the Wanted mode. Going at this like you would other action-orientated multiplayer fare will get you noticed and killed in a second – running pell-mell across rooftops, or leaping from beams while the crowd below calmly goes about their business doesn't lend itself to blending in.

On a technical level, the character you use for multiplayer games won't dictate your playing style; rather, they're just a skin to identify you in the world. You will be able to set presets that you can swap between spawns. Each of the characters Ubisoft has created looks distinctive, yet fits into the *Assassin's* universe; expect to see courtesans in the field around executioners, nobleman, priests and more. Each will have their own unique weapon and assassination animation to bring something personal to each character.

In *Brotherhood* you're no longer just one man fighting the fight; in the other *Assassin's*

games there was always the knowledge that the organisation you belonged to were working in the background, but *Brotherhood* gives you far more control. Your involvement in the single player mode has moved from spotlighted bit-player to commander, and that's an important step in the *Assassin's* line of titles. We really want to know more about the multiplayer modes but we're damn excited about seeing how Ubisoft turn the graceful art of a planned kill into something a bit more frenetic.

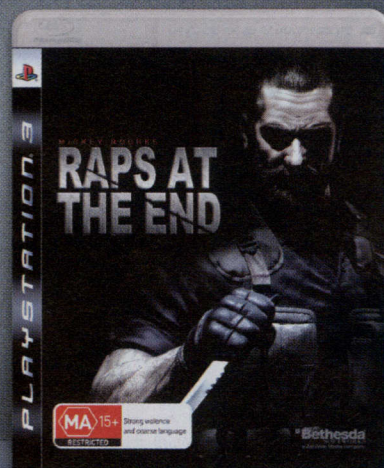
No matter what you're interested in, there's something new for everyone, while still packing your favourite bits from *Assassin's Creed II*, but better. Dead keen? You should be. 

SNIPER ON THE ROOF

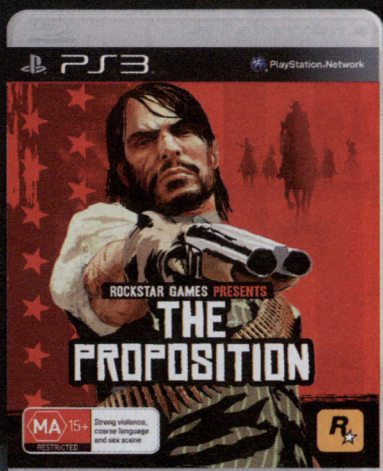
The team at Ubisoft Montreal are also introducing "the gunmen archetype in *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*," they said. "Of course, this new archetype will be able to use guns and will undeniably cause more damage to Ezio. Ezio will not only have to deal with the rooftop archers now, but the gunmen as well."

"The fiercest of these enemies Ezio is up against are the Papal forces: highly trained, extremely skilled soldiers. They are at the same time strong, agile and have total awareness of their environment. These soldiers will defend the Vatican and the Borgias at any cost and Ezio will have a hard time defeating them alone, he will need allies."

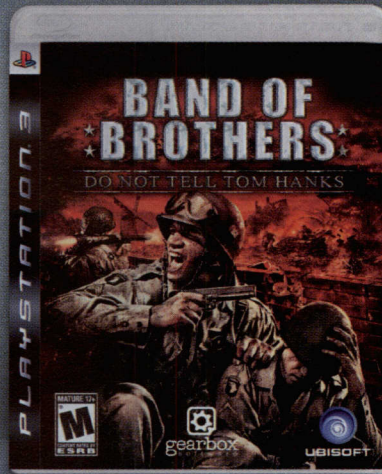
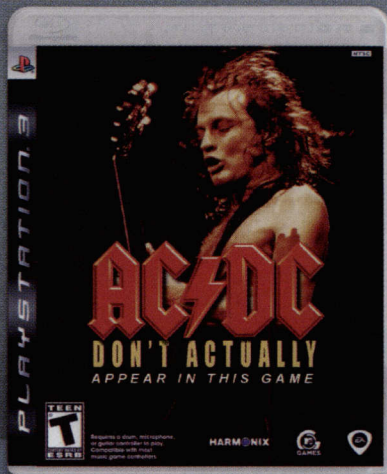




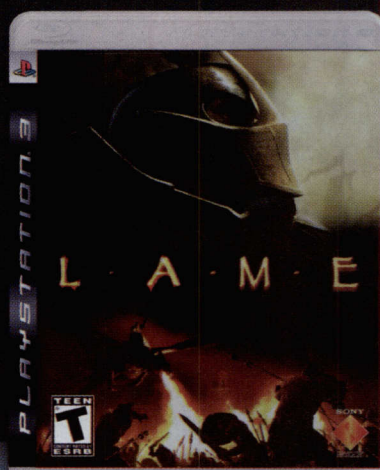
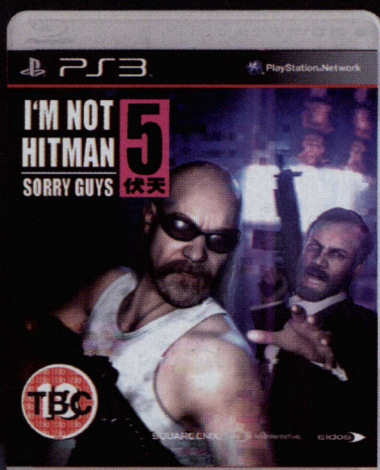
IF GAMES WERE HONEST



IF GAMES WERE HONEST



What if games were a little more straight-up about what they were selling you? Things would look a little different if honesty was truly the only policy. We're never shy to poke a little fun when a little fun deserved to be poked, so we present to you a range of popular PS3 games as they might have appeared in a parallel universe. Don't fret readers: we're well aware that, while some of these games are a bit on the pungent side, many of them are truly excellent. We kid because we care. No harm, no foul.

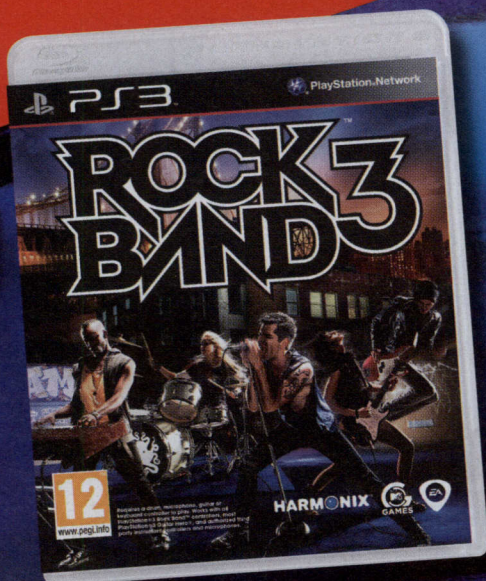


IMAGES: ADAM MATHEW

INDEPTH



TOO DARN



To date, over 13 million copies of *Rock Band* titles have been sold, scooping up more than \$1 billion in total sales. The *Guitar Hero* series has double those figures but it's *Rock Band* that remains at the pointy end of innovation.

Now the series that showed us the future of music games is about to do it all over again.



LOUD

WORDS: LUKE REILLY

Boston, Massachusetts. Aside from having an exceptional basketball team, and something about a tea party, all we know about Boston is that it's the home of the Eagle's Challenge Burger. That's five pounds of beef, 20 slices of cheese, 20 pieces of bacon, five pounds of fries, a giant sour pickle and a soft drink, served to one person.

We had been led to believe Harmonix Music Systems, the developer of *Rock Band* (and, before that, *Guitar Hero*) was based in Boston. It's not. It's based in Cambridge – just across the river.

Suddenly, however, things began to make more sense. Cambridge is one of the USA's key intellectual hotspots; it's home to both Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Should it surprise anyone that a developer based in a town presumably packed with smart young people would be so far ahead of the curve?

Possibly not.

IT'S JUST LIKE ANY FAD IT RETRACTS BEFORE IMPACT

The Eagle's Challenge Burger is proof you can have too much of a good thing. Hamburgers and chips are awesome. 12 pounds of hamburger and chips is not. 2009 saw two *Rock Band* titles: *LEGO* and *The Beatles*. However, it also saw four console *Guitar Hero* games – and that's not counting *Band Hero* and *DJ Hero*. It was too much. Over-saturation has been attributed to playing a large part the decline of music game sales in 2009.

But while interest may have cooled since 2009 the passion at Harmonix seems to be heating up hotter than ever.

It's being claimed that *Rock Band 3* will change the way fans think about music games. Hyperbole like this isn't a rare commodity when it comes to pre-release hype but we're inclined to believe it. Looking at the huge slate of improvements and additions to *Rock Band 3* it's clear Harmonix isn't fapping around with

this one. *Rock Band 3* will be the biggest leap in music games since the original *Guitar Hero* back in 2005.

Rock Band 3 will boast an 83-song strong setlist (from 83 artists) and allow access to far more music than any other music game. Virtually all existing *Rock Band* tracks (*Rock Band* and *Rock Band 2* discs, downloaded songs, track packs, *AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack*, *LEGO Rock Band* and *Green Day: Rock Band*) will be supported. By the time *Rock Band 3* is released Harmonix estimate there'll be close to 2,000 tracks at players' fingertips.

For music game fans, *Rock Band 3* will very much be a continuation of the formula they've come to love. *Rock Band 3* will be compatible with all your current instrument peripherals. If that's all you're after, you'll be able to buy the disc alone and enjoy the new tracks and the swathe of improvements in every area, which we'll detail a little later on.

But for those who want more, *Rock Band 3* will have it too.

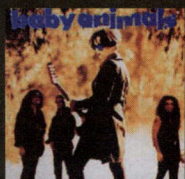
INDEPTH

NEED YOU TONIGHT

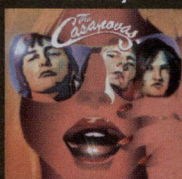
24 hours before we were due to chat to *Rock Band 3* lead designer and Aussie ex-pat Dan Teasdale he suddenly left the company. Without a local on the ground we fear the limited, but steady, stream of Australian acts might dry up. Harmonix! Hop on iTunes and grab these Oz and NZ tunes now! You'll like what you hear. Do we need to send you a mixtape? We haven't done *that* since high school.



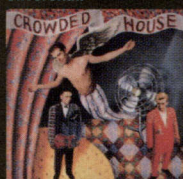
'If You Want Blood (You've Got It)' AC/DC



'Rush You' Baby Animals



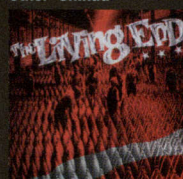
'Shake It' The Casanovas



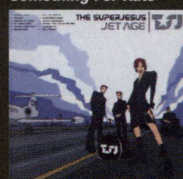
'Don't Dream It's Over' Crowded House



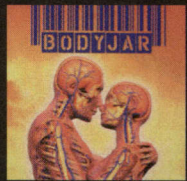
'Hard Act To Follow' Grinspoon



'Prisoner of Society' The Living End



'Secret Agent Man' The Superjesus



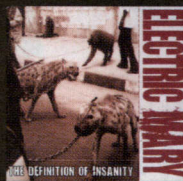
'Not the Same' Bodyjar



'Hold, Hold, Fire' Calling All Cars



'Slice of Heaven' Dave Dobbyn



'Let Me Out' Electric Mary



'Best of Both Worlds' Midnight Oil



'Better' Powderfinger



'Fader' The Temper Trap



'Molotov Brother' Twelve Foot Ninja



'Israel's Son' Silverchair



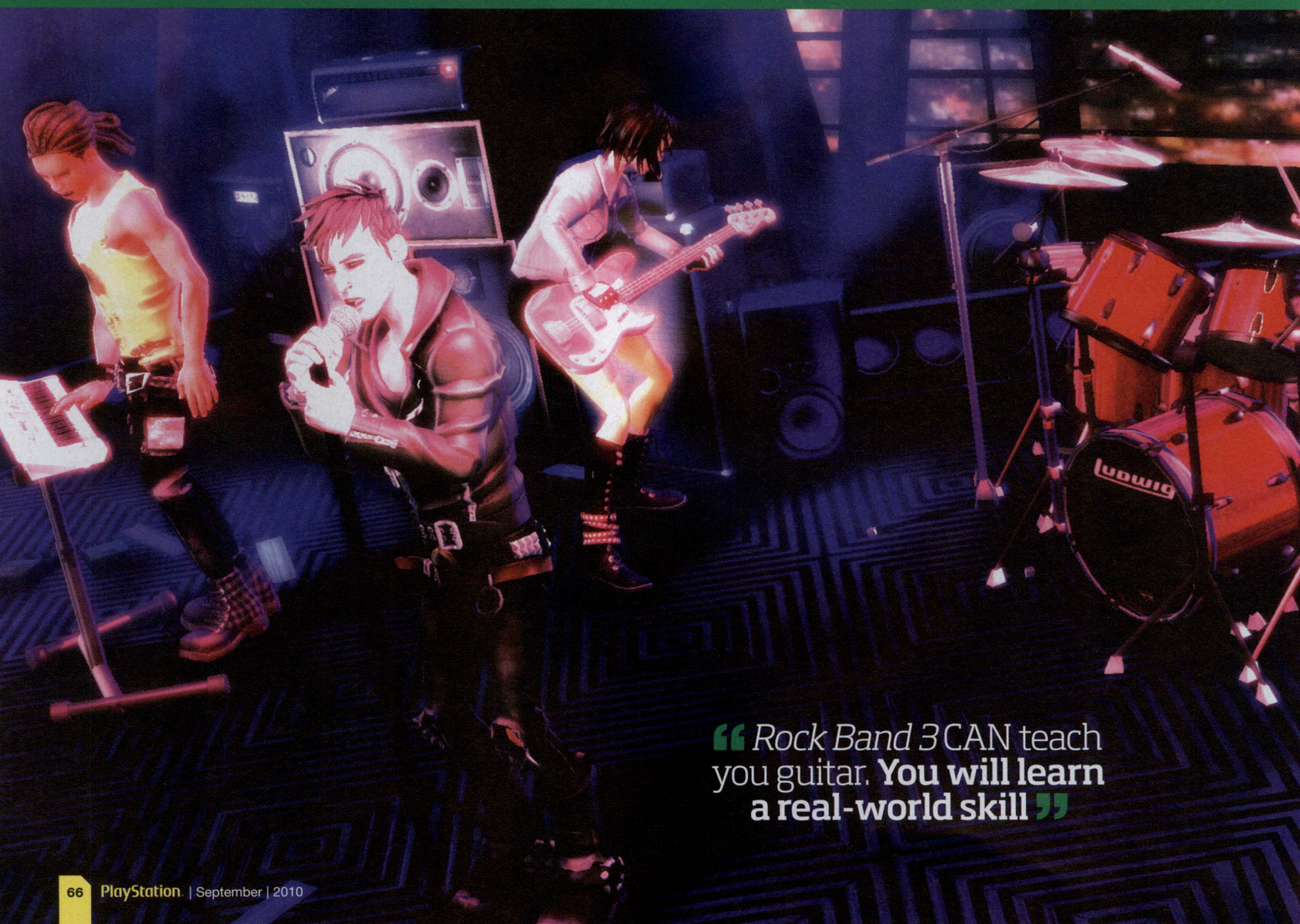
'Better' The Screaming Jets



'One Will Hear The Other' Shihad



'Transparanoia' Something For Kate



“Rock Band 3 CAN teach you guitar. **You will learn a real-world skill**”

Note the new cymbal icons



The numbers are the frets



It sure ain't sheet music

IS THIS THE REAL LIFE?
(IS THIS JUST FANTASY?)

Know any tiresome hipsters who think being able to strum along to the soundtrack from *Juno* makes them a guitarist? We do, and she thinks *Rock Band* is beneath her.

There's always been a quiet resistance to music games from small pockets of particularly boring musicians who feel the whole exercise is pointless because you're not really playing music. To put that in perspective, it'd be like Tim Cahill getting pissy at people who play *FIFA*. It's stupid.

All that's over.

Rock Band 3's new Pro mode makes playing virtual instruments closer to reality than ever. Pro mode is designed as a learning tool that will accurately mimic the playing of real instruments. MadCatz and Fender will be manufacturing controllers and add-ons to support Pro mode (see 'The Hardest Button to Button').

Guitar and bass players will be required to match specific fingering on frets and strings, drummers will have to strike the correct cymbal pads in addition to snare and toms and pianists will use precise fingering across the whole keyboard.

For Pro guitar (and bass) single notes will be represented by a number over a string. This number will represent a fret on the guitar. Chords will be represented by solid bars over multiple strings. The base fingering will be indicated by a number on a specific string and the shape of the bar itself over the remaining other strings provides relative fret positions for the rest of your fingers. Chord names are shown off to the side of the highway for those who already know them.

For Pro drums a three-cymbal set is added to the core four pad/one pedal layout. This doesn't add any lanes to the highway but rather three of the lanes will now be asked to multitask. Small cymbal icons will replace the regular note icons when you need to strike a specific cymbal.

Pro keyboard will use all 25 keys of the new unit. Like the new guitar and drum Pro tracks, if you were to step away from the game and were to play these *Rock Band 3* charts on a real piano they would be the right notes.

Like *The Beatles* and *Green Day*, *Rock Band 3* will support harmonies, and allow vocals for up to three

players. With four instruments and three singers, *Rock Band 3* will support up to seven separate players at once.

The key thing to keep in mind is that Pro mode isn't a fifth, single layer of difficulty beyond Expert – it's an entire mode unto itself. Pro mode will still be broken down into difficulty levels of its own. You can play Pro mode on the 'Easy' difficulty level, no problems. This reduces the number of notes to hit but still requires proper fingering or hitting the correct cymbal. Chords and busier drum sequences are introduced as you progress up the difficulty levels.

By the time you get to 'Expert' Pro mode you going to be playing the song for real, note-for-note. Good luck with that though. We've seen Pro mode note highways; it's like reading Morse code from a pianola roll whizzing by at Mach 3. Unless you're Zombie Jimi Hendrix or Eddie Van Halen (in which case, thanks for reading!) you're going to need to work up to it.

What Pro mode is, though, is a true educational tool. *Rock Band*, as it stands now, is useful in teaching non-musicians fundamentals like rhythm and will likely built their understanding of progressions and patterns. Besides the absence of cymbals drumming isn't far removed from reality either. What *Rock Band* certainly doesn't do, however, is teach you to play guitar. It just isn't transferable.

Rock Band 3 CAN teach you guitar. You will learn a real-world skill. Much like Sony placing young men who are exceptionally good at *Gran Turismo* and discovering they aren't bad behind the wheel of a real race car either, *Rock Band 3* can and will teach you a skill you can use when the TV is turned off.

Pro mode will be available across all game modes will be selectable at the same time as when selecting the desired difficulty and handedness for the instrument. Pro mode players can play alongside normal mode players in any game mode, no problems.

Interestingly, Harmonix has authored DLC since the release of *Rock Band 2* with the necessary cues for cymbal strikes, so a huge number of back catalogue tracks will be immediately playable in Pro mode for drums. How Harmonix approaches the rest of its legacy content (regarding Pro guitar parts, adding keyboard parts, etc.) has yet to be determined.

INDEPTH

WE CHASED OUR PLEASURES HERE, DUG OUR TREASURES THERE

We asked you who your favourite local rock bands were and why. Here's what you had to say.

MITCHELL CONWAY

It's gotta be AC/DC! There's no one better than these old Aussie rock legends. Ya can't beat them.

MATT PARKER

The Living End! I've seen them about 15 times live and they have killed it everytime!

STEPHEN HANSON

The 'chair because they are from my hometown Newie!

SKYWARP GREER

Parkway Drive: best Aussie band known to man. It's un-Australian not to like Parkway Drive!

ALEX HODSON

Cog, Karnivool, The Butterfly Effect, Birds of Tokyo, Powderfinger...

DAVID BOLAND

Rose Tattoo, Midnight Oil, The Screaming Jets, The Angels, The Choirboys, Skyhooks. If you want some hard rock/metal Mortal Sin, Lord, Alchemist, Black Majesty.

OLIVER JOSEPHS

May I be the first to suggest Frenzal Rhomb. If you've seen 'em live, especially way back when, you'd have to agree.

BRAD WALL

28 Days.

TINY TIM

The Amity Affliction is getting it done for me these days. Post Hardcore version of 'Love is a Battlefield'? Yes, you have me hard in the pants.

JORDAN MADGWICK

You can't mention Aussie rock bands without mentioning Cold Chisel.

DAVE WARK

Grinspoon, because they're awesome.

Want to participate in discussions just like this? It's easy! Head to www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia and become a fan and you'll be able to tell us what you think 24/7. Want your opinion printed in the magazine? This is how.

PUT ANOTHER DIME IN THE JUKEBOX BABY

CONFIRMED TRACKS

'Combat Baby' Metric
'Portions of Foxes' Rilo Kiley
'Dead End Friends' Them
'Crooked Vultures'
'Get Free' The Vines
'The Hardest Button to Button'
The White Stripes
'Lasso' Phoenix
'Oh My God' Ida Maria
'Plush' Stone Temple Pilots
'Me Enamora' Juanes

'Been Caught Stealing'
Jane's Addiction
'Walkin' on the Sun'
Smash Mouth
'In the Meantime' Spacehog
'Rainbow in the Dark' Dio
'The Power of Love'
Huey Lewis and the News
'I Love Rock and Roll' Joan Jett
'Sister Christian' Night Ranger
'Here I Go Again' Whitesnake
'Just Like Heaven' The Cure

'Crazy Train' Ozzy Osbourne
'Bohemian Rhapsody' Queen
'Crosstown Traffic' Jimi Hendrix
'Break On Through' The Doors
SPOTTED IN LEAKED TRAILER
'20th Century Boy' T.Rex
'25 or 6 to 4' Chicago
'Midlife Crisis' Faith No More
'Need You Tonight' INXS
'Roundabout' Yes
'Spinning Wheel'
Blood Sweat and Tears



Question: What do you call a beautiful woman on the arm of a keyboard player?

Answer: A tattoo

TOUGHER THAN DIAMONDS, RICH LIKE CREAM

If all this sounds a little too hardcore for your liking, allow us to repeat that *Rock Band 3* is really two games in one. The normal *Rock Band* returns as well, only better and more accessible than ever.

Rock Band 3 has adopted the same drop in/drop out gameplay introduced by Neversoft in *Guitar Hero 5*. Players can join in the band or duck out at any time, even in the middle of songs.

The game's new user interface is called the 'overshell'. The 'overshell' is basically a range of pop-

played with more than one person you would record a band score only. In *Rock Band 3* the scoring has been engineered to provide and record individual scores per band member too.

Scoring is also broken down so you be able to see where and how you got your points, and thus where exactly you need to improve. As a result of this overhaul none of your scores for existing *Rock Band* songs will carry over to *Rock Band 3*.

There'll also be a new challenge system with over 700 awards to earn.

Character customisation will be amped up, and you'll see your avatar and you band more often throughout the game - not just while they're performing. They'll always be around, clambering in and out of vans and practising. They'll even appear in the background while you select songs to play.

Speaking of songs, *Rock Band 3* will come with new systems in place to navigate your ever-expanding song library. There'll be more sorting settings to cut down scrolling and you'll be able to rate songs (from one to five lighters). Low-rated songs are less likely to appear in random setlists. You'll be able to build, share and share custom playlists and be able to receive song recommendations based on your personal ratings of songs compared to the ratings of other *Rock Band 3* users.

WHAT'S YOUR PRICE FOR FLIGHT?

There's never been an explanation as to why *Rock Band 3* never made it to brick-and-mortar games stores in Australia, and there's none forthcoming. It's not Harmonix's call, and MTV doesn't have an answer for us. Buy it online if you haven't already.

Rock Band 3 is confirmed for a local release this Christmas. The exact date hasn't been announced, and our requests for specific details regarding the local availability and pricing of the new peripherals remain unanswered, but make space in your lounge room now.

This is the real deal.

up, per-player menus that you let you adjust your personal difficulty, pick your instrument, toggle lefty flip, etc. while other players are still picking songs and moving around the rest of the game.

The scoring system has been overhauled too. In previous band games when you

THE HARDEST BUTTON TO BUTTON

The new Rock Band 3 controllers.

ROCK BAND 3

SQUIRE STRATOCASTER GUITAR

The Squire Stratocaster combines real electric guitar components and advanced touch-enabled sensors and thus can serve as both a fully functional guitar (that can be plugged into and played on a real amp) and *Rock Band 3* controller. The Squire will also have a MIDI out port. The tech is currently not available to be able to use any regular electric guitar in the game, but Harmonix is looking into the possibility.

FENDER MUSTANG PRO-GUITAR CONTROLLER

The Fender Mustang Pro-Guitar will require players to form real chords and pick notes spanning six strings, 17 frets and 102 buttons. The Mustang has six individual nylon-coated steel strings (each with its own sensor) which must be picked or strummed in the correct fashion. Players will also be able to mute or cut off notes. It also has a MIDI out port.

MIDI PRO-ADAPTER

Gamers who already own MIDI-enabled keyboards and drum kits will be able to simply buy adapters that will enable them to use their pre-existing instruments as *Rock Band 3* controllers.

WIRELESS KEYBOARD CONTROLLER

Like the Squire Strat this is a real, genuine musical instrument. It will function as a MIDI keyboard that can be connected to a computer. The device features 25 keys (a full two octaves). The keys are velocity-sensitive (but non-weighted). It also features a touchpad on the side. The small area is the button to activate overdrive and the larger area is an effects strip – used to alter pitch, like a whammy bar on a guitar. It even comes with pegs for attaching a strap and using it as a keytar. Sweet.

WIRELESS PRO-CYMBALS EXPANSION KIT

The new cymbals attachment is based largely on Mad Catz's original add-on cymbals for *Rock Band 2*. These have been reworked to feature better hit detection, a softer and quieter build material and a more realistic 30-degree downward angle. The cymbals, however, cannot be made compatible with the original *Rock Band 2* drums. This presents a problem as *Rock Band 2* drums were never available here (indeed, the game itself is still only available via online retailers). There's a new kit coming for *Rock Band 3* (with built-in support for double-bass pedal and come bundled with new Pro-Cymbal attachments) but our local representative could not confirm if this will be on sale locally at the time of print.

RED DEAD LIFE LESSONS

Five things **Red Dead Redemption** teaches kids about life (which aren't entirely true)

WORDS: LUKE REILLY

Thanks to Australia's horrifically incapable and wrinkly old classification system (conceived sometime between the first and second Persian invasions of Greece and designed for a population of perpetual 11-year-olds who'll never age and thus never require content more suited to the mature tastes of, say, an adult) kids around the country are likely quite saddle-sore after two months of Rockstar's hugely well-received and thoroughly bloody fantastic Western opus.

Kids, however, can be quite vulnerable – especially to powerful messages. *Red Dead Redemption* certainly isn't short of messages, but they're all a bit dour. To prevent a sudden rise in disenchanted kids packing it all in due to a newfound resentment of life brought on by the game's unflinchingly brutal portrait of how hard life can suck when everything in it is conspiring to kill you, we'd like to (partially, at least) debunk a few of these.

Here are five life lessons one *might* pick up playing through *Red Dead Redemption* and why you could say they're a little misleading.

1 >> VIOLENCE IS THE BEST SOLUTION (FOR EVERY PROBLEM, ALWAYS)

Entertainment for youngsters has become pretty toothless in the 20 years since Casey Jones very deliberately and theatrically crushed The Shredder inside a garbage truck. As kids, we were taught that bad guys got killed by good guys. That was the *natural order of things*. As such, we have a keenly developed sense of justice and certain amount of forgiveness for loose-cannon vigilantes. Our parents, partners and the police tell us this is the *wrong* attitude and that we should probably turn in our sackful of doorknobs. We were beginning to admit they had a point when *Red Dead Redemption* brought it all back again. Thief making off with someone's horse? Shoot him. Stick-up merchants giving you flak? Shoot them. Bozo beating up on a woman? Shoot him. Drunken yahoos lynching a local? Shoot them. You're probably getting the point here.

In *Red Dead Redemption*, the quickest, easiest and most economical solution for all problems is violence. Always violence. Violence is this game's native tongue, and you need to be thoroughly fluent in it.

Of course, in modern civilisation violence is usually the *worst* solution. Two wrongs mostly don't make a right. They make a double wrong. That's wrong squared, and it results in twice as many problems for twice as many people. It looks good in movies, which is why every man secretly wishes his dad was John McClane, but in real-life they'll probably just toss you in jail.

We'd totally still crush The Shredder though.

2 >> THE WORLD IS FULL OF COUGARS (AND THEY ALL WANT TO EAT YOU)

Close to every creature you come across in *Red Dead Redemption* would much rather see you dead. Cougars, though? *They hate you the most.*

In *Red Dead Redemption* cougars are hit and run cruise missiles that spawn from nowhere and travel at roughly the speed of sound. First you'll hear a wild growl and then your horse will fall dead to the ground with some crucial parts of its neck locked in the maw of a quickly disappearing shadow. Before you have time to dust yourself off and wish Buster all the best on his journey to that big ol' glue factory in the sky, the shadow rematerialises from behind you, turns into a cougar and bites your face off.

In reality, fatal cougar attacks in North America are *less* common than fatal bee stings. In *Red Dead Redemption*, there are no bees. But there is a 100 per cent chance you'll be eaten by a cat when you leave town. The world is a dangerous place kids. But it's not this dangerous.



RED DEAD LIFE LESSONS



3» BEING FAMOUS AUTOMATICALLY QUALIFIES YOU FOR DISCOUNTS (AND MAKES EXTORTION SIMPLE)

So you've killed a few people and ran a bunch of errands. Suddenly you're a celebrity. Nevermind that *Red Dead Redemption's* path to fame is a socially problematic one. Rather, this game teaches kids that if you're famous you can rip off anyone you want. Build up your honour in the eyes of the public and suddenly you'll find yourself getting discounts in any store you enter – and all the trash you peddle to them will be worth double. Take Chopper Read, for instance. He rolled over some drug dealers and assorted underworld thugs and went on to become a cult icon. We doubt he gets half-price at Coles though.

The upcoming generation have entitlement issues as it is. The last thing we need is more kids convinced that a few good deeds here and there simply means they'll be able to save a buck or two. You shouldn't be running into that burning building snatching up orphans and war veterans because of the prospect of freebies for life.

4» SHOOTING A GUN FROM AN OPPONENT'S HAND IS SIMPLE (AND IT MAKES PEOPLE RESPECT YOU MORE)

Shooting the gun from the hand of an opponent is simple and results in no potentially life-threatening injuries. At least, that's how it is in *Red Dead Redemption*. In fact the last marksman challenge is to shoot the guns from the hands of six people without reloading. People love it too. They just lap this stuff up. They'd much rather see you disarm a violent criminal who loiters around challenging strangers to deadly duels than, you know, kill him.

Truth is, it's rubbish. Besides, a bullet hitting a gun will shatter on impact and the shards will lodge themselves in any and all nearby flesh. If you're ever in a position where somebody is pointing a gun at you, you should probably aim for something larger than the tiny gun in his or her hand. Like perhaps their torso. This only really applies if shooting people is in your job description, incidentally. Everyone else should just hand over last night's takings and take the rest of the afternoon off.

5» YOU CAN MISTREAT WOMEN AS MUCH AS YOU WANT (BECAUSE THEY JUST WANT TO ROB YOU)

Red Dead Redemption hates women. It hates them with a fiery, insatiable passion. Women in its world are either manipulative spinsters or horse thieves. We garnered a bigger bounty stabbing a goat in public than hogtying a nun and a hooker on the main street.

If there's one thing this game wants kids to take away it's that women are going to be your chief undoing. It starts off innocently enough when a lovely blonde rancher girl cons us into doing a series of chores around her farm, simply to repay a \$15 doctor's bill. We oblige because it's the only way the game will progress and we're temporarily buoyed by the assumption we'll see her naked (which, now we know, doesn't happen).

But it gets much, much worse.

On one of our trips to the desert to gather a bouquet of very manly and essential flowers herbs we happened upon a woman in clear distress, and in her underwear. We paused and let her approach but she simply wrenched us from the saddle and proceeded to make off with our horse. The .44 calibre insurance policy slung over our shoulder made sure she didn't get far, her audacity punished with several servings (and several magazines) of instantaneous justice.

It happened twice more before we realised there are no helpless women in the desert.

And don't get us started on the women with 'stagecoach trouble'. Every one of them is waving you down to a halt beside their 'marooned' coach so you're more conveniently placed to be murdered by the gaggle of armed Mexicans she's got stashed away.

At any rate, we got creative and left one of these deadly temptresses tied up on a railroad track where she was pulped by a loco's cowcatcher. Disturbingly, there's a secret Trophy for that (and it HAS to be a woman). It's like your older brother catching you beating your bologna like it owes you money. You feel a little ashamed, but he's simply happy that he's not the only one doing it. Every time that Trophy is earned somebody in the Rockstar Trophy wrangling department feels a little less perverted.

To summarise, there's one clear message here: get close to a woman and she's just gonna take your stuff. Our wives and girlfriends have told us that's not true. They shouted it and cried a little, but they're right. Most women are lovely, and they're unlikely to marry you just to get half your DVD collection and that box full of Matchbox cars you kept for future boy.

The result, unfortunately, will be a generation of jaded, single blokes who are liable to shoot any woman that simply comes frolicking up to him asking for directions.

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“There’s a rough sort of charm at work that will keep some invested”

SINGULARITY



WHAT WE’VE BEEN DOING THIS MONTH



45% Transforming into a cyber-truck

45% Transforming from a cyber-truck

5% Wondering why our *Singularity* review code only arrived the day after it was released in stores. Not cool.

5% Trying to remember if the post-E3 lull last year was this quiet

74 SINGULARITY

Time waits for this man

REVIEW RATINGS

PlayStation
GOLD AWARD

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn’t mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.

PlayStation
BRONZE AWARD

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren’t fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there’s no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of ‘bad’ just as there are degrees of ‘good’. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. *OPS* has handed out this score only once: hello *Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust!*



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40” Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.

WORSE THAN

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR



BETTER THAN

BEING LOST IN TIME



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SHOOTER | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: RAVEN SOFTWARE | **PLAYERS:** 1-12 | **RRP:** \$99.95

SINGULARITY

Come with us now on a journey through time and space. Well, time, anyway

Fittingly, *Singularity's* journey to store shelves has been delayed by time.

It was supposed to arrive last year, and many had thought it lost completely following multiple delays.

It's here now, though, and it tells a tall tale indeed – one where Mother Russia winds up tampering with the world during the Cold War by way of secret research into time travel. They've discovered an unstable mineral christened 'Element 99' on a remote island, Katorga-12, but

something's gone terribly wrong. The place is constantly fluctuating between 1955 and 2010, its populace of live-in staff and their families have become warped mutants, and two scientists vie for control of the universe amidst the madness. The US solution? Send in two guys (Black Ops guys, though) via screamingly conspicuous helicopter to sort things out. You're Nate Renko, one of those guys. You don't say much, but you don't have to – everyone else does enough talking as it is.

Singularity has been getting a bad rap. Its first couple of hours are awful, that much is true – you run a gamut of inane story-telling devices (think miscellaneous recordings left behind by previous inhabitants) before finally procuring your first weapon, the Centurion Revolver. It's not a fun weapon, either. It's slow, inaccurate, and the bullets seem to have a few problems with collision detection, particularly if you've just shot something and it's still going through a 'reeling from being shot' animation.

The designers probably hoped that this sluggish introduction to more promising things would thicken the digital air with tension, but it doesn't. While there are some eerily *F.E.A.R.* 2-like scares waiting in the rainy wings of



Katorga-12 when you first crash-land, it's a frustrating and unappealing genesis. Worse still is that *Singularity's* most intriguing drawcard – the TMD, or 'Time Manipulation Device' – isn't introduced into proceedings until a good few more hours of play. When it finally arrives, it's even a slight let-down. Sure, zapping that debris blocking your path back into the past so that it's now an unobtrusive pillar and no longer rubble is cool, it really is; but then you try to zap something else, say a wall. Nothing happens.

Only very specific things in *Singularity's* game world can be affected by the TMD's orange rays of chronological dismemberment, and often it's incredibly obvious stuff that is essential to proceeding. Can't reach that ladder? Handily, there just so happens to be a crate nearby. What's that, it's squashed and broken and it doesn't provide you with the requisite boost needed to reach said problematic ladder? Zap it so it trips back into the past when it wasn't busted. Voilà, and so on and so forth. It's not very inspiring, especially considering the potential a concept like the TMD had to really do something original and crazy.

It's not all bad, though. At least, it's not all as bad as you might have read elsewhere. Even though *Singularity* often seems intent on backstroking in unoriginality – even shamelessly ripping off *BioShock's* telepathy plasmid verbatim not long after you discover the TMD – when it finally gets going, there's a rough sort of charm at work that will keep some invested. The gunplay eventually becomes a lot of fun,

and is often prone to skin-of-the-teeth chaos. Enemies are relentless and creative – if there's an explosive barrel nearby, they'll hurl it at you – and your health takes a beating very quickly if they get in close (although somewhat unfairly, it's extremely irritating that you have to manually heal yourself with a touch of the D-pad's 'up' button, and that doing so cues a few seconds of bandage application that means you're going to get walked on even more).

Nevertheless, it's when *Singularity* breaks away from its derivative nature that things improve markedly. Case in point: the Seeker Special Purpose Rifle, which invites you to ride a slow-moving bullet from one side of the battlefield to the next, hopefully straight into someone's brainpan. The TMD's application in combat, too, can be the cause of a few giggles. Zapping enemies means they crumble into aged dust, and for those guys hiding behind large riot shields invincible to your gunfire? Well, you know what to do.

Unusually for a first-person shooter, the story is quite good. Now that doesn't sound like much when you just came to get your Doctor Who on and kill things, but Raven Software's deft handling of the oft-tricky notion of time travel disrupting the workings of the world is very clever. It's clever enough that, as you stand poised to make one of three ending-altering decisions at *Singularity's* calamitous finale, you're really not sure which choice to make. The question is, will you stick around that long? Most of you probably won't.

Toby McCasker

“It's when *Singularity* breaks away from its derivative nature that things improve”

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Graphically a little behind the next-gen curve, but some brooding environments go down a treat.

SOUND

Forgettable ambient music coupled with canned monster howling means if you're going to get sucked into this, the audio's not going to be the catalyst.

CONTROLS

Standard, workable shooter gameplay abruptly off-set by having to learn the strange nuances of weapons like the Seeker Special Purpose Rifle.

REPLAY VALUE

Once you're done, you're done – and multiplayer modes are slim pickings indeed.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME

The book that put Stephen Hawking on the intellectual map, *A Brief History of Time*, attempts to explain the weirdness of cosmology – the Big Bang, black holes, and good ol' $E = mc^2$. Basically, time travel forwards is possible. Really, it is. You just have to want it badly enough to travel at terrifying light speed. Yiew!

VERDICT: There was a lot of potential in the TMD for unlimited greatness. Sadly, *Singularity* hasn't been worth the wait.

7



Jets, when you get to use them, are really cool

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: HIGH MOON | **PLAYERS:** 1-10 | **RRP:** \$79.95

TRANSFORMERS: WAR FOR CYBERTRON

Transform and roll out

"What needs shooting?" asks a Decepticon, roughly 10 minutes into the first chapter. Anything that moves or shoots back is the correct answer.

You'll do a lot of moving and shooting in all of *War for Cybertron's* modes, though it gets pretty repetitive in the single player campaign. Cleverly, you can choose to begin with the Decepticon campaign and find out how Starscream teams up with Megatron, or jump into the middle of the game for the Autobot story and play through Optimus Prime's rise to leadership before zagging back to chapter one.

This is a game for fans, and fans whose friends are fans or don't mind feeling that they've seen it all before. There's no doubt it's one of the best *Transformers* games available – the last one we can think of is the PS2 title back in '04 – delivering atmosphere in spades thanks to the voice acting and cool character animations, but compared to other third person action games it feels second rate.

There are a few things that grind our gears. Sloppy AI is the biggest problem, and you'll see enemies moving in a lazy ellipse, unbothered by your stationary team-mates who are unloading their arsenal without feeling the need to get closer and finish the job. Comrades also like to run into walls, or get stuck in the scenery, or not join you until you're past the next checkpoint and then warp to your position after the cutscene.

Although you're in a three-bot posse you'll always feel like you're the one doing all the hard work without back up, and it's made even more frustrating as you're often scratching for ammo. Detritus from fallen enemies builds your offensive special meter, but why can't we scavenge their bullets, or have this as the mechanic that refills your stash? Instead you have to rely on predesignated caches and conveniently placed weapons that indicate you'll need that particular tool for an upcoming foe.

You'll wring more enjoyment by playing *War for Cybertron* in co-op, forgiving the *Transformers'* lack of inertia as you blast your way through 15 or so hours of storyline. Or you could just go online, where the game takes off. Pick your class from the four on offer and you'll be more absorbed in the transforming antics, as the gameplay becomes much more dynamic and entertaining. You'll have a nagging feeling that this feels a lot like other games you've played, but with a cool transforming sound every time you shape shift.

However, it's still sullied by a lack of weight, the bots floating around rather than being monstrous entities that feel like they could cause a lot of damage. Far from mindless but further from brilliance, *War for Cybertron* is fun without being engaging, ideal for an undemanding audience. **Paul Taylor**

WORSE THAN

GHOSTBUSTERS



BETTER THAN

TOY STORY 3



FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

A *Transformers* fan's dream is blemished by screen tearing and dumb AI on both sides.

SOUND

Excellent and authentic voice acting with cheesy cartoon lines, and that transforming noise is brilliant.

CONTROLS

Lumbering characters that need a bit more weight, but also a bit more speed in humanoid form.

REPLAY VALUE

Forget about the single player campaign and focus on multiplayer instead. It'll keep you busy for a short while, and the price is right too.

VERDICT: Its strength lies in multiplayer, both co-op and competitively, but the fun's neither original nor truly thrilling.

7



ESCALATION

Forget about plot and standard multiplayer fare for a moment. If you just want to blast some bots, Escalation mode is your best bet. Waves and waves of enemies stream out at you, and the goal is to just hang on for as long as possible whilst racking up points. Between rounds you get to spend your points on upgraded weapons and health, etc. – so you'll have to juggle your resources to plough through. It's definitely one of the better parts of the game.

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PlayStation
Official Magazine
BRONZE AWARD

INFO

FORMAT: PSN | **GENRE:** ACTION RPG | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
DEVELOPER: HOTHEAD | **PLAYERS:** 1-2 | **RRP:** \$19.95

DEATHSPANK

Unicorn poop: tastes like innocence



PSN is the perfect environment for quirky games like this



...and poop hammers



...ahem

If you appreciated the humorous writing and quirky visual styling of *Brütal Legend*, you'd do well to check out *Deathspank*. Penned by old Tim Schafer comrade and all-round funny bastard Ron Gilbert, *Deathspank* is essentially a warped piss-take of *Diablo*. That said, you just know it is more addictive than Tim Tams dunked in heroin tea.

You must take on the role of the titular Deathspank, an elbow-chinned heroic stereotype who frequently spouts dialogue that makes Zapp Brannigan sound like an intellectual. The story behind his odyssey is just as ludicrous as it is inconsequential; the reason you'll stay glued to this adventure is to score ever increasing stashes of loot and level-ups. As soon as you drop into this quirky world you're swarmed by side-quests and the temptation to complete "just one more" regularly turns a stint into a session. Who can resist grinding to swap a crummy Cleaver of Cleaving for a Demon Poop Hammer?

The pain-dealing itself is straightforward and vaguely reminiscent of the *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* series. *Deathspank* has quick access to four pre-assigned weapons on the face buttons, consumable potions on the d-pad, a quick-flick target lock system and a timed block ability. At the start of the game it all seems like a mindless mashfest but this steadily ramps up with tougher enemies in larger packs that require intelligent equipping of gear, shrewd use of weapon types and even tactical retreats to allow time to mung on food to avoid a spanking yourself.

Deathspank also manages to be a delightful time-leech thanks to its self-referential comedy. Every trope of the action RPG formula gets ripped on here; your checkpoints are medieval port-a-loos, the quest hints you receive come from fortune cookies and all of your

WORSE THAN

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE



BETTER THAN

BRÜTAL LEGEND



The presentation is charming

equippable items have side-splitting names and descriptions. In addition to this, *Deathspank* can have interactive conversations that are on par with the superlative wit and charm of the early *Monkey Island* games.

While the game is amazing value for money considering it offers a good eight to 10 worth of adventuring, it is let down by so-so animations and some occasional slow-down that suggest it hasn't been polished as well as it could have been. Like-wise the tacked-on two player co-op feels disappointingly shallow in that the second player is just a glorified familiar who has no true stats or equipment of his own. This last issue could just be a blessing in disguise, as the equipment menus lack streamlining and can stall the action for far too long. Junking items and trying to compare weapons are processes that are nowhere near as intuitive as they should be.

They're all minor quibbles on an otherwise outstanding product though. For the money you're laying down, *Deathspank* is like the glittering bags of swag it depicts. Highly-amusing and addictive as all hell. **Adam Mathew**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Looks okay, but the 2D/3D mashup visuals loses its whimsy after a while. Animations are basic.

SOUND

Dry British humour accentuated by sterling voice talent. The squawks of 'stoopid chickens' can get repetitive.

CONTROLS

The death-dealing is accessible and hides some depth. The constant pausing and micromanaging in the menus is a touch tedious.

REPLAY VALUE

The level cap seems fairly low and unfortunately there's no real class customisation to warrant going through again.

VERDICT

You can safely buy this and not experience disappointment or a hand-shaped welt on your bum.

8

JOE DANGER

Have a wheelie good time

PlayStation
OFFICIAL
**BRONZE
AWARD**

Borrowing from the ancient *Excitebike*, *Joe Danger* also takes cues from platforming games. Essentially, you have to get from the left side of the screen to the right as quickly as possible, either without making any mistakes or by grabbing all the collectibles. It's impossible to fall sideways off the bike, but give it too much throttle and you'll land on your spine, or pitch your self into a cunningly placed set of spikes or shark pit. Restarts await.

On top of that there are also springs to bound off to reach amazing heights, and you can move backwards through the air (though Joe never changes direction) by tapping brake. The controls take a while to master as you need to perform stunts to fill your boost meter, and a few levels require multiple run-throughs to nab all the collectibles.

At best, it expands the life of the level, but at worst it feels forced to have to repeat. Instead of skill encouraging you to remember a course layout due to you enjoying it, memorising the layout is almost compulsory to keep the trick combo rolling on. You can blame the camera for this at times.

However, persist and you'll wring more joy out of the level editor that gives you the game's tool set and says 'go for it'. Whilst not as in-depth as *ModNation* or *LittleBigPlanet* it's easy to lose a few weekends into creating something devious to share with your mates. A sound purchase. **Paul Taylor**



➤ Danger's his surname



➤ "Duck!" "Where?"

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Bright and colourful. Instantly appealing

SOUND

We wish we had an announcer to herald *our* arrival.

CONTROLS

Fiendish with a dash of diabolical.

REPLAY VALUE

It won't take long to smash, but there's a level editor.

VERDICT

Simple without being simplistic, this is a gem. It requires a bit of patience though.

8

VOODOO DICE

This game might just do your block

INFO

FORMAT: PSN
GENRE: PUZZLE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$15.95

Fact: the numbers on opposing sides of a dice always add up to seven. Another fact: that's roughly how many new swear words you'll make up on some of *Voodoo Dice*'s more perplexing levels. This game can get tough, fast.

It's a simple concept. Get your die from the starting point of the level and make it to the goal. On your way you'll hit switches to make gates open, dissolve other static dice by matching the numbers, and tangle with

flipped controls, your own die speeding up and slowing down as well as moving statues and other objects into place.

There's definitely a lot of variety here. On some stages you'll be flexing your twitch muscles as you move objects into place or hop across disappearing platforms, other times you'll be frantically trying to figure out just how many rolls it'll take to line up a certain number with another die ahead. At times it feels like a little unfocused as the

gameplay changes its tone and there are some downright boneheaded design flaws that will force you to restart. A limited *Prince of Persia*-style 'undo' function would've worked wonders, especially when you're trapped on one-way arrows into a dead end. Hopefully *Voodoo Dice 2* has slightly more responsive controls – and a more adjustable camera while we're at it.

Push beyond the first world and the erratic difficulty spike (thankfully you can skip stages and come back to them) and you'll have fun with *Voodoo Dice*.

It's a welcome distraction from the currently slew of action titles, though not an essential one. **Paul Taylor**



➤ They built THIS city with blocks that roll

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

A better colour scheme would've helped.

SOUND

Perfectly capable though thoroughly unremarkable.

CONTROLS

Needs a better camera and more responsive controls.

REPLAY VALUE

Optional time goals on each stage will beat you down.

VERDICT

Worth getting though the hook isn't immediate due to slightly confused design.

7



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The trio of heroes get a brand new level, and it is an absolute steal for less than two bucks. More than worth the asking price.

ROCK BAND - THE VINES PACK 1



Aussie rockers The Vines had a great first album and their track 'Outtathaway' should be a part of your Rock Band collection.

DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS LELIANA'S STORY



Another, less bandwidth-gouging expansion where the titular Leliana is a young bard. Keenly priced, too, at \$11.45.

LBP - MARVEL COSTUME KIT



Partner this with the separate Marvel Level Kit, and you can take Iron Man, The Thing, Daredevil, Doctor Octopus and Mystique into battle.

AVP - BUGHUNT MAP PACK



An extra four maps set on BG-386, where you'll have to tangle with weather effects across spooky ancient temples.

NEWS

PSN DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

Last month's *Red Dead Redemption* DLC is a joy, and there's going to be more content for the western action game. The first of four announced packs is 'Legends and Killers', due out just as you're reading this. For \$15.95, this multiplayer-focused pack contains a generous nine new map locations (that more than doubles the number of maps available at this point in time), eight new characters plucked from *Red Dead Revolver*, as well as a new projectile weapon, the tomahawk. This new weapon also brings new Challenges for both single player and multiplayer modes. Over the next few months there will be more multi- and single-player content including flavour of the season, zombies, in the 'Undead Nightmare' Pack. Review coming soon.

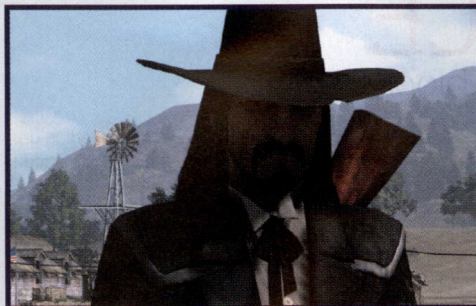
Joining the joyful *Deathspank* (reviewed on page 78) is EA Partners other PSN title, *Shank*. This side-scrolling brawler, whose art style borrows from graphic novels and golden age comics, promises an experience best suited for co-op. *God of War* writer Marianne Krawczyk has fleshed out the characters to bring a solid back story to both the titular Shank and his partner Falcone. Could it, and the totally charming *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World* (which came in just a fraction too late for us to review this issue) lead a resurgence in side-scrolling beat 'em ups? *Final Fight* may just have two young pups nipping at its heels.

Scandal-hungry gamers worldwide collectively crapped their daks and mid last month, when a video popped up on YouTube on a rival console that made it appear a 'membership' was going to be required



to play *Modern Warfare 2* online. The video followed comments by Activision's top boss, Bobby Kotick, that he would "have *Call of Duty* be an online subscription service tomorrow," when speaking to The Wall Street Journal. Wedbush Morgan Securities analyst Michael Pachter proceeded Kotick's comments by saying he expected Activision would start charging people to play *Call of Duty* online by the end of the year.

However, Infinity Ward's Robert Bowling said on his blog, fourzerotwo.com, "There is not, and will never be, additional fees required to subscribe and play *Modern Warfare 2* multiplayer." But what of Treyarch's upcoming *Black Ops*? Josh Olin from Treyarch wrote on Twitter "No, you will not have to 'Pay to Play' #COBlackOps Multiplayer either. Rumor -> Squashed." The end.



VIDZONE CHANNEL SPOTLIGHT

This month we look at the best songs in the NME Recommends TV Channels



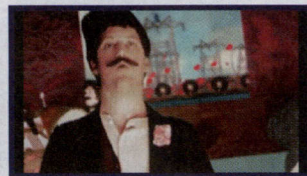
KASABIAN - 'FIRE'

In an American mid-Western town, music is both a weapon and reward when a bank job goes wrong for the long-haired rockers.



KINGS OF LEON - 'USE SOMEBODY'

With a spine-tingling opener, this looks like it was directed by Michael Mann with swooping shots of a city at night.



MODEST MOUSE - 'FLOAT ON'

The clip reminds us of Franz Ferdinand's 'Take Me Out', but with more of a stream of consciousness feel. You'll be a sucker for the quick cuts and low-res animation.

VIDZONE

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available free on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13,000 music videos at the push of a button!

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



PlayStation®
Network

DLC

MODERN WARFARE 2 RESURGENCE PACK

More maps, more mayhem

So here we are, what feels like a couple of short months since the Stimulus Package landed. Do you feel like you've got your money's worth from that? How you answer that question will sway your decision on this purchase.

Some of our criticisms from the Stimulus Pack remain – you're paying for two maps from *COD4* and three new ones – but by now, there probably aren't any casual players who feel the need to sniff around new maps. Hardcore players – and there's plenty of you out there – will get their money's worth.

The two maps that have carried over from *COD4* are Strike and Vacant. Strike's a Middle Eastern-style map, with streets running off one another, promoting harried dashes from cover to cover. Solid, if a little bland. Vacant's a golden oldie, a contrast of light and dark, snipers outside and grenade lobbers inside. You can also tool up with SMGs and shotguns, so this is a welcome return.

From the new maps, Carnival, Fuel and



Trailer Park, it's the bright showground of Carnival that's the highlight. Prepare to feel like a ditz as you (mistakenly) fire a few rounds into the mannequins peppered throughout the rides. It's also a place for snipers to hide out in the rollercoaster.

The visual brilliance of Carnival doesn't detract from the sharp design of Fuel. A large map that still funnels combatants towards the action, you'll be dodging sniper fire and overcoming others with marathon and lightweight perks.

Finally, Trailer Park, will divide players. This maze of barbecues, dumpsters and a shell of an airplane is definitely for close-quarters shoot-outs.

VERDICT:

Like your very first sports car, you'll baulk at the cost but love the way it makes you feel.

INFO

GENRE:
SHOOTER
RELEASE:
NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER:
INFINITY WARD
PLAYERS:
2-16
RRP:
\$21.95



DLC

SKATE 3 HAWAIIAN DREAM

Aloha!



When he isn't cutting down trees in the intro to *Skate 3*, Danny Way's known for getting big air. His DLC encapsulates the big air mentality that he's known for.

It's inspired by Hawaiian locale rather than being a true-to-life replication. Thus, blue skies, lush trees and stomach-churning drops. The centrepiece is a rollercoaster-like ramp that flicks skaters up and off into a pool that's sketchy to hit, but with time it'll become second nature.

While there's new street terrain you'll pick this up if you love to go fast and high rather than being a technical skater. We're especially fond of the huge halfpipe that transitions into a smaller

vert, perfect for precarious handplants.

Perhaps the biggest lure is the 24 new challenges, as well as bunch of Trophies to add to your collection. Danny Way's also a playable character, and EA have tossed in a bunch of new items to make your own Hawaiian paradise.

VERDICT:

A worthy addition for your *Skate 3* collection, and the new challenges are a boon for those who crave more.



INFO

GENRE:
SPORT
RELEASE:
NOW
DISTRIBUTOR:
EA
DEVELOPER:
BLACK BOX
PLAYERS:
1-6
RRP:
\$10.95

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE

Enemy AI making you yawn? Feel like conquering the world? Take your skills online with this quintet of fantastic multiplayer titles. These offer the best bang for your buck!



MODERN WARFARE 2

You can't argue with numbers. There are a tonne of competitors online, plus the DLC adds to the abundant options available.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

The connection issues are fixed, so there's no excuse not to jump on, form a posse and start hunting for challenges.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a posse hanging around. Golden rule: winner stays on.



FIFA 10

Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is quietly brilliant with 10 versus 10 matches.



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics.



MULTIPLAYER

SINGULARITY

Though the creatures aren't gone you must go on

INFO

GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: RAVEN SOFTWARE
PLAYERS: 2-12
RRP: \$99.95

Press down on the d-pad at the main menu and you'll find multiplayer. Doing said action is strongly suggested – not only because the multiplayer is incredibly fun, but it's also insanely addictive.

It's a good add-on to the single player experience and does well to expand on some of the features that make it enjoyable, even if the modes are limited. Playing online sees the forces of the soldiers playing out against the creatures from the single-player dig – each with their own different set of weapons, perks and special abilities. You have four basic classes to choose from – the standard grunt, the in-your-face offensive, the healer and the defender. The maps are small but are fun and easily navigated and you'll quickly figure out how a level works and how to get back into the action.

The soldier's side is presented much like the main game and utilises some of the powers gained in the single-player run-through. As an added bonus you have the option to change your team member, your weapon and special

perk at anytime throughout the match. If you find yourself struggling a quick change of weapon, perk or team member could shift the tide of the game.

You have five weapons to choose, with usual stuff like shotguns, assault rifles and sniper rifles, plus five perks that change depending on your character. All of these handle well against your Creature counter-part.

The Creatures side messes with the formula a little and at times was more fun to be than the Soldiers. As the Creature you play from a third-person perspective with emphasis on melee combat. You choose from four Creatures; the grunt with the power to teleport, the healer who heals by (disgustingly) throwing up on team members, the big defensive monster with

eight legs and a built-in laser cannon and the Phase Tick, a.k.a. 'noisy cricket' (think *Men In Black*). The latter was the favourite here, not only because you got to play as a tiny little bug with the ability to cut ankles, jump crazy high and crawl on the ceilings, but because if you got close enough to any enemy soldier, you can possess them and get some serious pay back under the disguise.

Not everything's perfect. There are only two game types to play, with them being team death match and the 'capture the flag' based modes. Sure, the different characters help add to the longevity of the experience, but a few different and unique elements would have made it a whole lot better. Also, there's no integration of the time manipulation within the multiplayer. It seemed very strange to leave out such an integral part of the single player experience from the multiplayer when it would have worked so well.

VERDICT:

Pretty thin on options, but what it lacks in variety it gains in gameplay. A more than fun diversion. Better than we expected.

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ON SALE NOW!

RULE RDR NOW!

WANNA BE A LEGEND OF THE WEST?

Red Dead Redemption's secrets for the lootin'! Yee-hah!

Like it, hate it or just can't stop playing it - *Red Dead Redemption* has set PS3's the world over alight with its engaging, harsh, darkly comic "post-Western" world.

Or "horsey/shooty-shooty" as it's technically called. Probably.

If you're anything like us - and let's face it, you are - your unfinished Legend of the West outfit calls to you. "Finish me!" it pleads, "finish meeee!" The way we see it you have two options here: 1) Get online and trawl through the endless "helpful" YouTube videos (many of which are just plain wrong) or, 2) Get the good oil right here. You won't even have to leave the lounge room.

There are four types of Challenge in RDR: Hunting, Survivalist, Sharpshooter and Treasure Hunting. Each challenge has up to 10 levels to complete, and all must be finished for 100% game completion.

You will receive a reward at levels five and 10 of each challenge, except Sharpshooter.

You'll also get a Legend of the West outfit, which is a sweet, calf-length black duster coat - way better than the poo-brown one.

HUNTING

General Tips: when you find an area rich with the animals you want, chuck out some bait. Oh, and save. Lots. Some of those animals are NOT your friend.

Hunting Level 1: Collect five coyote pelts. A nice easy challenge. These barky mongrels are pretty much everywhere.

Hunting Level 2: Collect five deer skins. As above, deer are everywhere.

Hunting Level 3: Kill five wolves with your melee knife and collect five wolf pelts. Another easy one. Wolves more commonly come at night... mostly.

Hunting Level 4: Collect five boar tusks and three armadillo carapaces. Armadillos are located in both New Austin and Mexico but may be hard to see because of their size. Get down on the ground and track them on foot. Also avoid using large calibre weapons on them as it blows them out of existence. Boars can be found in Tall Trees and Hennigan's Stead. Save lots with the boars. They can be sneaky.



TROPHY HUNTER

Looking for gold, silver, and bronze in your favourite titles? Here are three to grab in *Red Dead Redemption*



FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

Keep the pardon letter given to you by Seth at the end of the mission "Exhuming and Other Fine Hobbies" buy just paying cash for your bounty. The best place to rack up a \$5000 bounty is the roof of your Armadillo safehouse (exit to your balcony, climb up). Hide, lose your heat and save periodically (on a different save). Once you've built up \$5000 mosey over to the telegraph office.

Hunting Level 5: Kill two cougars with your melee knife and collect two cougar pelts. Found pretty much anywhere near mountains, cougars can be dangerous. Use Dead Eye to wound them with a low calibre bullet (just the one – in the tail or hind quarters) then equip your knife and move in for the kill. Note: you'll now be able to purchase the super powerful, single shot per reload Buffalo Rifle.

Hunting Level 6: Collect five raccoon skins, five skunk skins, and five fox pelts. Okay, this one gets really annoying! Raccoons and skunks can be found in the area around Hennigans Stead and Cholla Springs. Foxes can be found in Tall Trees and Rio Del Lobo canyon. Also there's a weird glitch south of Armadillo – where if you keep running around the shop at night a raccoon or skunk will spawn.

Hunting Level 7: Collect five Elk meat and five bighorn skins. Bighorn can be found in the hills around Tall Trees and West Elizabeth. Elk can also be found in Tall Trees. Elk are the ones with the big antlers and bighorn are the ones with, erm, small horns.

Hunting Level 8: Kill a bear with your knife and collect one bear skin. Bears are found in the Tall Trees to the north. If you shoot a bear once with the Evans Repeater, say, or something of similar power (trying to avoid a headshot) you can kill it with only a few knife stabs and slashes and still get credit for the challenge.

Hunting Level 9: Search Ojo Del Diablo for "Khan" the Jaguar and collect his pelt. Head to Ojo Del Diablo and walk around. He'll likely pounce before you know what's going on but at least the challenges are getting less like busy work, eh? Use Dead Eye.

Hunting Level 10: Search Aurora Basin, Stillwater Creek and Nekoti Rock for "Lobo" the Wolf, "Gordo" the Boar and "Brumas" the Bear and collect their pelts. Just like challenge 9 you'll want to head to the areas listed and hang about. These cool beasts aren't backwards about coming forwards so be ready with Dead Eye. And that's it! Hunting finally gets fun and they stop! Bah! There'd best be some Hunting DLC, Rockstar!

Note: Now skinning animals gives you a consumable health item! Vittles!

SURVIVALIST

General Tips: If you're having trouble finding plants just buy a Survivalist Map and open it in the area you're looking. It seems to last around 20 minutes and you can always buy another one when it runs out.

Survivalist Level 1: Collect six wild feverfew. You can find these in Hennigans Stead and Cholla Springs.

Survivalist Level 2: Collect six desert sage. You can find them around Gaptooth Ridge.

Survivalist Level 3: Collect four red sage. You can find them around Rio Bravo.

Survivalist Level 4: Collect eight prickly pears. They can be found all over Mexico.

Survivalist Level 5: Collect seven woolly blue curls. These can be found in Perdido. Note: once level five is complete your Survivalist Maps last twice as long.

Survivalist Level 6: Collect eight butterfly weeds. They are found in Diez Coronas.

Survivalist Level 7: Collect 10 hummingbird sage. These are in Tall Trees.

Survivalist Level 8: Collect 12 prairie poppies. These are in the Great Plains.

Survivalist Level 9: Collect 15 golden currants. These are in the Great Plains.

Survivalist Level 10: Collect 10 violet snowdrops and two of every other herb already collected. The Violet Snowdrops are in the snowy area of Tall Trees. The other herbs are where they were. Quick-travel and it won't take long at all.

Note: Now when you collect herbs you will receive a consumable item (Tonic) that restores Dead Eye which is EXTREMELY cool.

SHARPSHOOTER

General Tips: Use Dead Eye to get a bead on people's weapons and practise disarming via bullet. Trust us, it'll come in handy.

Sharpshooter Level 1: Shoot and kill five flying birds. If this gives you trouble, you are not fit to operate machines. This includes toasters. Also: lamps.

Sharpshooter Level 2: Shoot and kill five rabbits. Rabbits are small, common and hop around. Just keep an eye out for movement.

Sharpshooter Level 3: Kill five coyotes without them damaging you. Pretty easy stuff as coyotes are pretty cowardly.

Sharpshooter Level 4: Kill five flying birds from a moving train. Board the train and climb on the roof with the ladder. As long as it's moving use Dead Eye to take five birds down. If the train's being weird and glitchy try to load your last save. Did we mention save a lot?

Sharpshooter Level 5: Kill any two different types of wild animals in one Dead Eye meter. Shoot a bird and a bunny, a wolf and a coyote, a whatever and a whatever. Piss easy.

Sharpshooter Level 6: Shoot the hats off two different people's heads. It is important to note that if they die when you shoot their hat off it will not count towards the challenge, otherwise cut sick! Sombreros are good.

Sharpshooter Level 7: Kill three bears with a single shot each. Buffalo rifle, rolling block or shotgun for the real men. Dead Eye, aim for the head. Also: SAVE!

Sharpshooter Level 8: Shoot and hats off two people's heads AND disarm two people. It doesn't mean shooting them in the arm; it means shooting them in the actual gun.

Sharpshooter Level 9: Kill any six wild animals including birds, without reloading or changing weapons. This one is easy if you have the Evans repeater or the Mauser pistol as they possess big clips. Keep it unholstered.

Sharpshooter Level 10: Disarm six enemies without reloading or changing weapons. For some reason people have trouble with this one. Load up a weapon with a big clip, head into a bar, draw down on people, hide behind the bar. From cover you can disarm at your leisure. Sure you could try and do it at a gang hideout but this is the way all the cool kids are doing it, honest.

TREASURE HUNTING

General Tips: All treasures are located under a pile of odd, yellowish coloured rocks. There are only nine levels of the Treasure Hunter Challenge. You soon get used to their map clues.



Treasure Hunter Level 1: This treasure is located at the Hanging Rock up from Cholla Springs. Look around, find the rocks, inspect with triangle and there you have your first load of GOLD! Which you can sell.

Treasure Hunter Level 2: This treasure is located at Del Lobo Rock. It's a fiddly walk along a cliff. Crouching helps.

Treasure Hunter Level 3: It is located in the basement of Tumbleweed mansion. Right under the cow's skull downstairs.

Treasure Hunter Level 4: This treasure is located at Rio Del Toro. You need to climb up Penis Rock. Well, what would you call it then?!

Treasure Hunter Level 5: This treasure is located at Crooked Toes. Note: Now all stagecoach travel is free... for some reason.

Treasure Hunter Level 6: This treasure is located at Ojo Del Diablo. With Big Hole Innit Rock.

Treasure Hunter Level 7: This treasure is located at Roca De Madera. It's a long way down. Again, crouching helps.

Treasure Hunter Level 8: This treasure is located at Beechers Hope. Hey does this one remind anyone else of the ending of The Shawshank Redemption? Good movie, that...

Treasure Hunter Level 9: This treasure is located at Nekoti Rock. Save in case of bastard bears, etc.

Note: You can now carry twice as many consumable items.

And that's it. You could knock it over in a couple of days. Or one really long one. After completing all levels of all challenges you will unlock the Legend of the West outfit. It grants you twice as much Dead Eye and it looks menacing as all hell. Now get to shootin' and such.

Anthony O'Connor



MANIFEST DESTINY

Buffalo are hard to miss. Get plenty of Dead Eye consumables and try to pick them off in slo-mo (scoped rifle, headshots) from a medium distance, and close the gap and they scatter. There's only 20 of them but if they get out of your sight you have to wait until they regroup a day or so later. They're very valuable, so skin those buggers. Once you've killed all 20 the Trophy is yours. We had a separate save for our buffalo genocide.



HIGH ROLLER

With a little luck this can be a piece of cake. You'll need the Gentleman's Attire (join the Rockstar Social Club for that). This suit allow you to play high-stakes poker. Head to Blackwater Hotel (just down the street from the Blackwater Saloon where your safehouse is located). Buy in and go all in the minute you think you've got a decent hand. All you need is one player to bite, and to beat them. If you don't, just reload.

INTERMISSION

NEW RELEASES ON DVD & BLU-RAY

DIRECTOR: MATTHEW VAUGHN | **CAST:** AARON JOHNSON, NICOLAS CAGE, CHLOÉ MORETZ, CHRIS MINTZ-PLASSE, MARK STRONG | **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD/BLU-RAY

KICK-ASS (MA15+)

We love movies that do exactly what they say they do. It saves us time in the verdict box. Dave Lizewski is an unnoticed high school student and comic book fan who one day makes the simple decision to become a superhero, even though he has no powers or training.

What follows is an ultra-funny, ultra-silly romp that is fast, occasionally hilarious and often grotesquely violent. *Kick-Ass* superbly embraces – yet satirises – all the classic elements of superhero films, dark comedies and strong action flicks. Check it out.

VERDICT:

Unrelenting energy meets over-the-top blood-letting and a fair amount of swearing. Go in expecting savagery, not slapstick, and you'll be fine.

9

IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

The Dark Knight

Arguably the best superhero film of our generation



BENEATH HILL 60 (M)

DIRECTOR: JEREMY SIMS

CAST: BRENDAN COWELL, HARRISON GILBERTSON, STEVE LE MARQUAND, GYTON GRANTLEY

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Here's one thing you may not know about World War I. During the campaign in Belgium the Allies tunneled beneath German lines in an effort to detonate a cluster of explosives in hopes of unleashing the largest non-nuclear explosion ever wrought by the hand of man.

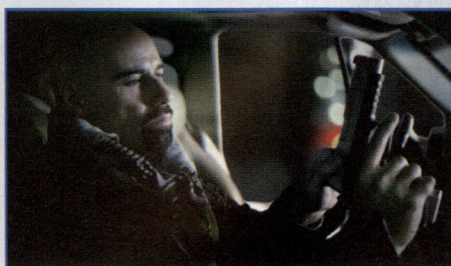
Beneath Hill 60 tells the extraordinary true tale of Captain Oliver Woodward and his secret platoon of Australian tunnelers. Thrust hundreds of metres below the hellishness of the trenches, Oliver and his men must conduct a savage, silent battle to outsmart ever-listening enemy miners and to defend their own leaking, labyrinthine tunnel system.

Although it never elevates itself above the heights of *Gallipoli*, this is nevertheless a significant war film that is filled with superbly crafted, tension-filled drama.

VERDICT:

Aussies doing what they do best: diggin', bein' mates and explodin' stuff.

8



FROM PARIS WITH LOVE (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: PIERRE MOREL

CAST: JOHN TRAVOLTA, JONATHAN RHYS MEYERS, KASIA SMUTNIAK, RICHARD DURDEN

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

This one feels more like it was born of hate, not love. A low-ranking intelligence operative working in the office of the US Ambassador in France takes on more than he bargained for when he partners with a wisecracking, fast-shooting, high-ranking US agent who's been sent to Paris to stop a terrorist attack.

Honestly, this whole film comes across like a middling '80s buddy comedy with bugged all jokes, ludicrous storylines and boring action scenes.

Travolta in particular becomes a stale parody of himself, thanks to a bizarre, nudge-nudge reference to the 'Royale with cheese scene' of *Pulp Fiction*. If you want sweet action set in Paris go watch *Taken* again.

VERDICT:

Nowhere near as action-packed and riotously fun as it wants to be.

4



DATE NIGHT (M)

DIRECTOR: SHAWN LEVY

CAST: STEVE CARELL, TINA FEY, JAMES FRANCO, MILA KUNIS, MARK WAHLBERG, MARK RUFFALO, RAY LIOTTA

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Date Night has a simple premise; a tired, emotionally-distant married couple find their routine date night becomes much more when they are embroiled in a dangerous case of mistaken identity.

You'd think that taking two of the funniest comedians today and putting them in a movie tailor-made for them would produce an instant hit. Unfortunately *Date Night* just turns out to be another romantic comedy, albeit one with a slight detour into the action thriller genre.

While there are some funny moments to be had, such as a car-swapping chase and a rookie strip scene, the script is pretty illogical and clichéd in some spots. If you're just after light-hearted comedy this is short, straightforward and should do the job.

VERDICT:

An awkward blend of action and comedy. This squanders the talents of its two leads.

6



THE FIFTH ELEMENT (PG)

DIRECTOR: LUC BESSON

CAST: BRUCE WILLIS, MILLA JOVOVICH, GARY OLDMAN, IAN HOLM, CHRIS TUCKER, LUKE PERRY, TOM 'TINY' LISTER, JR.

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Probably the best way to describe this would be a French version of *Star Wars*. 250 years in the future, life as we know it is threatened by the arrival of Evil and only the fifth element can stop it from extinguishing all life.

Leeloo is the perfect being who holds the secrets to the element and she is helped by ex-soldier, current-cab-driver, Korben Dallas. Dallas, in turn, is aided by the hilariously flaky entertainer Ruby Rhod.

Even after all these years, *The Fifth Element* still has bucketloads of charm, weirdness, action and endlessly quotable lines. This has multi-passed the test of time. Grab this Directors Suite edition now.

VERDICT:

An unusually tasty blend of sci-fi, action and comedy. Bonus Luke Perry cameo too.

8



TOP GEAR - THE COMPLETE SERIES 12 (PG)

DIRECTORS: VARIOUS

CAST: JEREMY CLARKSON, JAMES MAY, RICHARD HAMMOND

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

In this action-packed 12th series the boys travel to the USA to take three new generation muscle cars on a road trip to the Bonneville Salt Flats.

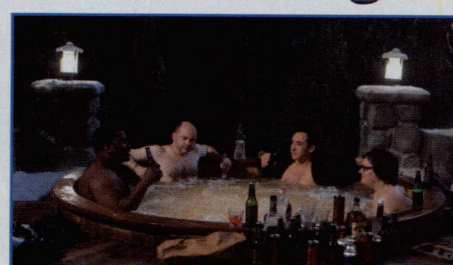
Along the way, Richard celebrates the 40th birthday of the iconic Ferrari Daytona, Jeremy scampers around the test track in the feisty Fiat 500 Abarth and James tackles his first ever power test in the amazing Pagani Zonda F Roadster.

Also, after years of waiting, the Stig finally gets to set a lap time in the pants-wettingly fast Bugatti Veyron. We may say this every time, but *this* was the best season.

VERDICT:

The Stig. In a Bugatti Veyron. What else do you need to know?

9



HOT TUB TIME MACHINE (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: STEVE PINK

CAST: JOHN CUSACK, ROB CORDDRY, CRAIG ROBINSON, CLARK DUKE, CHEVY CHASE

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

No, that title isn't a series of typos. *Hot Tub Time Machine* tells the tale of four buddies, all of them bored with their adult lives, who decide to travel back to their respective '80s heydays thanks to a time-bending hot tub.

Now, we know what you're thinking; that is just plain stupid. Fortunately, the immensely likable cast make up for most of the scripts flaws.

Robinson and Duke are terrific, and while it's always good to see Cusack getting back to his eighties comedy roots, he is outshined by Daily Show regular Rob Corddry, who somehow manages to make his horrible jerk of a character thoroughly likable.

VERDICT:

The concept sounds stupid on paper, but it gets executed better than you think.

7

Now available to rent or own on **PlayStation®Store**

The PlayStation Network Video Store offers hundreds of titles available to rent or own at the click of a button!

DIRECTOR: TODD PHILLIPS | **CAST:** LUKE WILSON, WILL FERRELL, VINCE VAUGHN, JEREMY PIVEN, ELLEN POMPEO, ELISHA CUTHBERT, SEANN WILLIAM SCOTT | **AVAILABILITY:** OWN \$17.99 | **SIZE:** 1100MB (SD)

OLD SCHOOL (MA15+)

Frank (the tank), Mitch and Beanie become disillusioned with their 'middle-lives' thanks to cold feet, a nymphomaniac girlfriend and boring family life, respectively.

In a moment of genius Beanie suggests that they should all form their own fraternity in Mitch's new house on a college campus to re-live their glory days. Cue the entrance of a ragtag bunch of misfit students, obese losers, middle-aged men and Blue – an old navy vet who is about a 100 years old.

Like all good college romps, the loveable party posse soon find themselves in the sights of the hopelessly square Dean Gordon 'Cheese' Pritchard. In order to keep Mitch's on-campus residence, the fraternity must partake in a hilarious academic decathlon to prove that they contribute to the school.

Old School is a cheery, unapologetically goofy comedy that features a ton of hilarious scenes, most of which are attributed to Will Ferrell – although Vaughn kills it too, and Wilson plays a perfect straight man.

VERDICT:

If you like low-brow socially unredeemable comedies, you'll lap this up. Todd Phillips' best until *The Hangover*.

8

TOP 10 MOVIES ON DEMAND

1. Zombieland
2. Ninja Assassin
3. The Lovely Bones
4. Couples Retreat
5. Zack & Miri Make a Porno
6. Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs
7. The Twilight Saga: New Moon
8. Avatar
9. Shutter Island
10. Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call – New Orleans

INTERMISSION

NEW RELEASES ON DVD & BLU-RAY

DIRECTOR: DAISUKE NISHIO | **CAST:** MASAKO MOZAWA, CMAYUMI TANAKA, MIROMI TSURU | **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD/BLU-RAY

DRAGONBALL Z KAI COLLECTION 1 (M)

The Alpha and the Omega, the be-all and the end-all; *Dragonball Z* is the Big Daddy of all shonen anime. *Bleach* and *Naruto* plundered it wholesale, and the anime scene really wouldn't be the same if Goku and his gaggle of flying, screaming, spiky-haired martial arts chums hadn't exploded on to our screens back in the '90s. Yet *Dragonball's* day in the sun is not yet over; if you thought that all the digitally re-mastered and un-cut editions of this epic were the last word on *Dragonball*, then think again: Toei Animation has taken the original, bloated animated series and trimmed out all the extraneous side plots, filler, and other assorted time-wasting nonsense, and condensed the series into a form that more closely matches the original manga. Less lunching, more punching.

The result? This 13-episode collection covers the

same amount of story as the first 30 episodes of the original series, and you'd be hard-pressed to see any glaring omissions or inconsistencies. A few new bits of animation have been thrown in to grease the editing wheels; the result is a series that feels as energetic and fresh as it did when it aired in the days of *Cheez TV*. In fact, if you sampled *DBZ* in the past, but were put off by the fact that 'it goes on forever,' now is the perfect time to check it out. It's power level is... over 9000!

VERDICT:

Dragonball Z hasn't just been digitally re-re-mastered for Blu-ray - they've also edited out all the boring bits. The result: balls-out martial arts mayhem.

9

IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

Naruto, Bleach,
or any other anime where the hero screams about how he has to 'INCREASE HIS POWER LEVELS.'



KURAU: PHANTOM MEMORY COLLECTION (TBC)

DIRECTOR: YASUHIRO IRIE
CAST: AYAKO KAWASUMI, MISA KOBAYASHI
AVAILABLE ON: DVD

We all love *Ghost in the Shell*, but there's a glaring flaw that we tend to overlook in our rush to gush over how memorable and influential it was: the main character had next-to-no personality.

Kurau: Phantom Memory has a very similar vibe to *GITS*; it concerns a young woman who's extraordinary powers make her gifted at espionage and wetwork. Yet Kurau's strength stems not from a cyborg body, but from being possessed by an alien intelligence; a life form called a Rynax that was sucked into her body in a freak atom smasher accident. Powerful, yet vulnerable, it's Kurau's emotional states that drive the story, not the plot.

VERDICT: Espionage, sci-fi action, and existential anguish. It's basically *Ghost in the Shell*, but with aliens instead of cyborgs.

9



LINEBARRELS: COLLECTION 1 (TBC)

DIRECTOR: MASAMITSU HIDAKA
CAST: MAMIKO NOTO, TETSUYA KAKIHARA
AVAILABLE ON: DVD

Beloved of militarism, enamoured of youth, seeking perfection through conformity, and absolution through a glorious death... Japan's national character never changes, and neither do giant robot shows. As always, the giant humanoid battle weapons are but metaphors for each characters force of will and sense of purpose.

The gimmick here is that the hero is a borderline dingbat - and a bit of douche into the bargain. It's Shinji Ikari all over again, except we actually get to see him face up to life's responsibilities and grow as a person through his shenanigans as part of an elite top-secret fighting force. To help smooth over this bumpy ride are plenty of CGI robot fight scenes; the action is slick, forceful, and surprisingly well directed.

VERDICT: A quirky giant robot show, with epic CGI battles, fan service, conspiracies, and tits.

7



NANA: COLLECTION 1 (TBC)

DIRECTOR: MORIO ASAKA
CAST: KAORI, ROMI PARK
AVAILABLE ON: DVD

Two young women on the cusp of adulthood head off to the big city to pursue their dreams. One is cynical, world weary, and a veteran punk rock singer; the other is bright-eyed, bushy tailed, and profoundly naïve. A chance meeting on the train brings them together, and throughout the maelstrom of drama and heartbreak that follows, they remain the best of friends.

Yes, this is another one of those 'shoujo' series - a franchise concocted specifically to entertain girls. Yet the likeable, flawed characters have a broad appeal; combined with the striking graphic design and intermittent humour, it makes for seriously addictive viewing. The only down-side is that you only get six episodes on the disc.

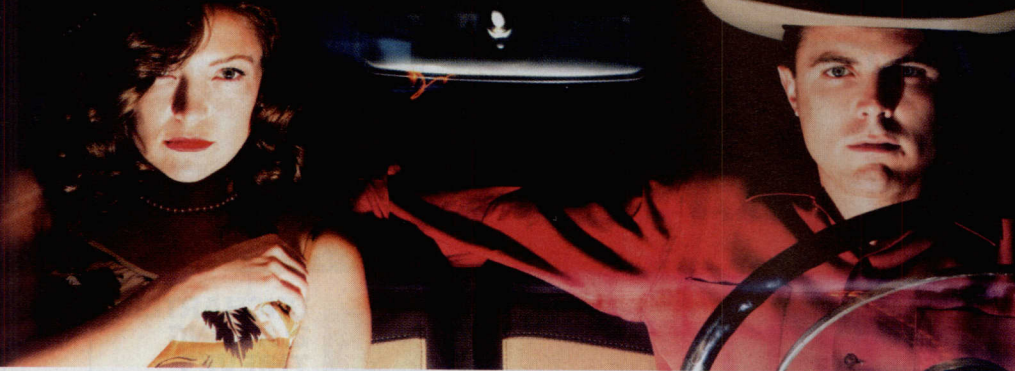
VERDICT: Sex, drama, and rock-and-roll. Yes, it's for chicks - but men who watch it won't necessarily be driven insane.

8



IN CINEMAS THE KILLER INSIDE ME (M)

DIRECTOR: MICHAEL WINTERBOTTOM | **CAST:** CASEY AFFLECK, JESSICA ALBA, KATE HUDSON | **IN CINEMAS:** AUGUST 26



Set in the 1950s, Lou Ford (Affleck) is the Deputy Sheriff of a middle-of-nowhere Texan town. Despite his gentlemanly appearance, Ford is a flat-out psycho and sadist. After forming a relationship with a prostitute (Alba), who is planning on blackmailing the son of a local construction tycoon, Ford double-crosses her. The results are fatal for more than one person.

There's more to the plot than that but going too much into detail threatens to wreck it, as it's thin on action but heavy on atmosphere. Affleck drives this and Ford's by no means an anti-hero, just a genuinely evil and manipulating character that gets by on a

mixture of luck, charm and arrogance. He knows how to get what he wants from people and isn't afraid of covering his tracks when called on his actions.

Rightly or wrongly, *The Killer Inside Me's* talking point is its raw brutality: this is difficult to watch in places, Ford becoming visually out of breath whilst he's reducing one character's face to a pulp (who comes away looking more like a rare piece of steak than a person). Nothing is glorified here, and while the film is (unsurprisingly) attracting controversy it's a gripping ride with an ending you won't see coming.

From Michael Winterbottom, director of the also controversial *9 Songs*.

ALSO IN CINEMAS

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ALICE CREED (TBC)

DIRECTOR: J BLAKESON

CAST: GEMMA ARTERTON, MARTIN COMPSTON, EDDIE MARSAN

Danny (Compston) and Vic (Marsan), two ex-cons, have a plan. Kidnap the girl (Arterton), get the ransom money from her dad and then let her go. But it's never as simple as it seems as emotions, their history and panic all weave together in this British thriller that has more radical twists than the Monaco GP.

Blakeson has done well to create so much tension from so little. There are only three characters in the movie, and about as many locations. While Arterton spends most of the film tied up she capitalises on the opportunity of not being in *Clash of the Titans* and puts in a stellar performance. Totally absorbing.

DESPICABLE ME (PG)

DIRECTORS: PIERRE COFFIN, CHRIS RENAUD

CAST: STEVE CARRELL, JASON SEGEL, RUSSELL BRAND

Riding on the crest of animated 3D films comes this story of Gru (Carrell), a villain who wants to prove his genius to the world by stealing the moon. Kids will get more out of *Despicable Me* than adults as the appeal is in the silliness and 3D glasses, rather than the gags – which are thin on the ground at the start but do ramp up.

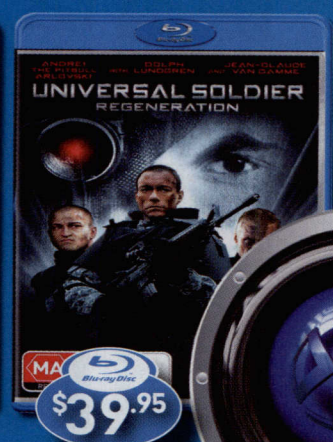
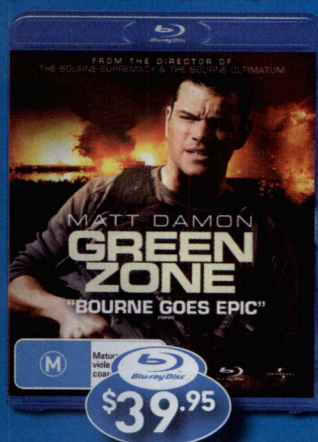
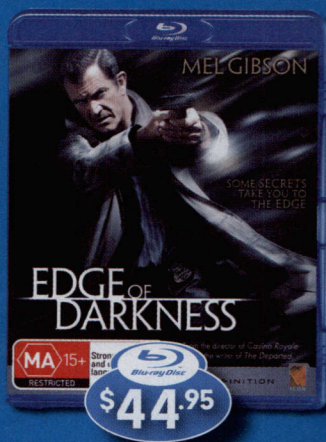
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THE BEST PSN GAMES

on PlayStation Store

BRAID
DEVELOPER: Hotthead
PLAYERS: 1

A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming as hell, it's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man. Buy it.



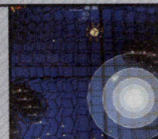
WIPEOUT HD
DEVELOPER: SCE
PLAYERS: 1-8

Yes, it's a HD remix of tracks from the PSP versions, but HD is too sublime to ignore. Utterly gorgeous, running at a blistering framerate and handles superbly. Mandatory. We may not have a fully-fledged PS3 version of the series for now, but this will do fine.



EVERYDAY SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: Queasy Games
PLAYERS: 1

Don't be fooled by the sparse art style. This cunningly blends music in with the action that turns it from a dual-stick shooting whimsy into a highly addictive blaster. It's very easy to lose hours and hours to this game as you strive to make it through the tough stages.



FLOWER
DEVELOPER: thatgamecompany
PLAYERS: 1

High concept and totally pretty, it plays like a dream. Guide petals on the wind using the motion-sensing of your DualShock 3. You will be amazed. More than one OPS staffer has lost sleep trapped in this game.



MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2
DEVELOPER: Capcom
PLAYERS: 1-2

It's by no means 'straight' *Street Fighter*, and nor should it. Stuffed with 56 characters, this three-on-three brawler is a visual and aural explosion. The HD treatment is superbly done. If you're a fighting nut, you should have this already.



BIONIC COMMANDO REARMED
DEVELOPER: GRIN
PLAYERS: 1

Bionic Commando Rearmed is a prime example of what many love about the PSN: being a platform for updates of classics. It's pure gameplay – and rock hard. We don't know why you'd bother playing the recent remake instead.



SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the best

ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTAIV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16

10



UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

"Easily the best PS3 exclusive to date, *Uncharted 2* combines genre-defining visuals, high adventure and cinematic intensity like nothing before. Don't miss the original either. Get both, this second."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-12

10



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

"Bigger, badder and more epic than *GTAIV*?"

Yep. If attention to detail, vigilante violence and skinning cougars interests you in the slightest, do not miss *Red Dead Redemption*. Buy it now. You're a daisy if you do.

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



ASSASSIN'S CREED II

"A far more compelling story than the revolutionary original, there's more to see and do, and more ways of dealing death than before. Ubisoft has tweaked the climbing mechanic to make it feel part puzzler, but all action."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft
Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1

9



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. One of the best games available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely one of the top exclusives. Buy and play this videogame now. Seriously."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



HEAVY RAIN

"Kudos to Quantic Dream for continuing to evolve its unique brand of gameplay and storytelling. Compelling, different, addictive – *Heavy Rain* is all of these things. This game will appeal to gamers and non-gamers alike. We just need people to stop telling us it's a revolution."

DEVELOPER: Quantic Dream
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1

8



GOD OF WAR III

"Easily eclipses anything out there and reclaims it's rightful place at the pinnacle of its genre. Believe the hyperbole. *God of War III* deserves an honoured place – both in your own personal collection and the mighty PlayStation Parthenon"

DEVELOPER: Santa Monica Studios PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1

10



JUST CAUSE 2

"Although there are a few technical shortcomings, *Just Cause 2* generates more fun per second than any other open-world title. So much better than the original, Avalanche has crafted one of the most exciting and entertaining open-world romps we've experienced in years."

DEVELOPER: Avalanche
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners
PLAYERS: 1

9

SHOOTER



BORDERLANDS

"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better from there. It takes the best elements of RPGs and shooters and fuses them, and it's simply the most rewarding co-op to date."

DEVELOPER: Gearbox PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4

9



KILLZONE 2

"Visually Killzone 2 runs through the competition like a bull in the

proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. Killzone 2 is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



BIOSHOCK 2

"Plot-wise, this doesn't match the original. However, the combat

has been spliced to near-perfection. A more than worthy sequel that should easily suck you back under for another tumble."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin
PUBLISHER: 2K
PLAYERS: 1-10

9



MODERN WARFARE 2

"It's almost like three games in one, stuffed with moments that will leave you shocked and breathless with excitement. Superbly crafted, MW2 is, with its older brother, a pinnacle of this generation's games."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-18

10



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

"It's not an FPS, but shooting is all you do – in the skies above Europe. Head-turning attention to detail and intense action. Awesome, actually."

DEVELOPER: Gaijin
Entertainment PUBLISHER: AIE
PLAYERS: 1-16

9



ALIENS VS PREDATOR

"Possibly the greatest movie-inspired

game ever. This positively oozes atmosphere and is a must for the fans. Wonderfully visualised, incredibly immersive and true to its inspiration."

DEVELOPER: Rebellion
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

"In almost every way *Bad Company 2* technically

outclasses the original, but that's to be expected. We just miss the mischief. But maybe that's just us. Even still, this is a top-tier shooter that's more than up to the task of standing side-by-side with *MW2*."

DEVELOPER: DICE
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-24

8



GHOSTBUSTERS

"Well-honed and accessible controls, some spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits combined with the *Ghostbusters* universe and come together for a thoroughly addictive experience."

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



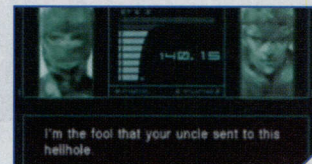
MAG

"You will need to put some hours in before you get to unlock the best goodies, and it's the kind of game that requires fairly frequent attention, but the pay off is one of the singularly most compelling and captivating shooters to date."

DEVELOPER: Zipper Interactive
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-256

9

TOP 5 GAMES THAT BREAK THE FOURTH WALL



METAL GEAR SOLID, MERYL ON THE CASE

We spent an age running around Shadow Moses Island looking for an in-game CD case to find Meryl's number. Turns out her digits were on the actual insert tucked into the back cover of the game box.



BRUTAL LEGEND, INTERACTIVE OPTIONS

While Eddie Riggs wasn't afraid to cuss, those shy of a few blue words and gore could opt out of the full experience by dialogue boxes that demanded personal answers. Slick and cheeky.



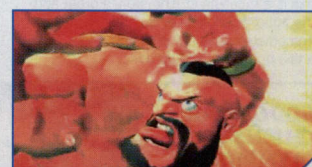
METAL GEAR SOLID 3, AN OLD MAN DIES

One of this game's boss fights against 'The End' could be entirely avoided by starting the fight, saving, quitting, then reloading a week later to hear he'd died of old age. It's still a pussy way out though.



EAT LEAD, THE CLICK OF A GUN WITHOUT AMMO

Matt Hazard knew he was in a videogame, but if you deplete his ammo, keep hitting 'fire' and he'd quip "just keep pulling the trigger, maybe it'll magically reload". Characters who berate players. Different.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV, HAKAN'S SPECIAL ATTACK

The huge Turk squeezes his opponent out of his oily grip, and instead of just sliding along the floor to infinity they bizarrely hit the game camera with a comical twang. It's like looking at a suction cup Garfield.

THE BEST PSP GAMES

Small system. Big games.

GTA: VICE CITY

DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1



This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, on PSP. Also? Phil Collins is in it.

MH: FREEDOM UNITE

DEVELOPER: Capcom
PUBLISHER: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-4



Monster Hunter is a system seller in native Japan, and it deserves that accolade here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, and rewards in spades if you're able to put the effort in.

WIPEOUT PULSE

DEVELOPER: SCE Liverpool
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-8



Beautiful, and weighted just right, it's a futurist's dream. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just pips *Burnout Legends* for best PSP racing game.

GTA: CHINATOWN WARS

DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1



Hilarious. Violent. Addictive. Yes, it's a port of a DS title, but it's a port done right, and still it rebels against the style of other GTA games. A tightly scripted, mature and entertaining package.

METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Mindscape
PLAYERS: 1-6



Polished, well-produced and thought-out, this is a must-have. The story's great and the action's addictive. Buy this game immediately, and a PSP if you must. This is a title no gamer should miss.

GOD OF WAR: CHAINS OF OLYMPUS

DEVELOPER: Ready at Dawn
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1



With fantastic graphics and tighter-than-hades gameplay, being shrunk to PSP size hasn't made this series any less epic.

RACING



PURE

"Pure shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock **PUBLISHER:** Madman **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"Dirt 2 is snazzy, but it's too boneheaded for its own good, has few real rally cars and very little proper rallying. The original *DIRT* remains a far better example of a next gen rally game. More varied and far less US-centric."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



SPLIT/SECOND

"Split/Second hasn't usurped the arcade racing king (see: the *Burnout* games), but this series debut signals it as a more than worthy adversary. There are plenty of tricks here to tempt you away from *Burnout Paradise*."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock Studios
PUBLISHER: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-8

8



RACE DRIVER GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of V8 Supercars and Colin McRae: *DIRT* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its roots though, and the V8 DLC Codies promised has vanished."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners **PLAYERS:** 1-12

9



NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

"SHIFT bucks the trend of all-American games, and treats you as an intelligent racer. Whether you want to get under the bonnet and tinker, or even just race with what you're given, this truly is a must-have package. It's also damn pretty and very, very noisy."

DEVELOPER: Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of split-screen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND 2

"Rock Band 2 is the best music game around. Import Rock Band and LEGO Rock Band to your hard drive, access the DLC, and you'll have over 1000 songs at your fingertips. You can't fault it."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8

10



THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

"From the tunes to screaming hordes of women to psychedelic trips through acid-fueled imaginations, Harmonix nailed it all. A landmark collaboration."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, SKATE 2 is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime. Massively addictive."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 10

"With its new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 was the year that the FIFA franchise managed to leap the perennial hurdle that is Pro Evolution Soccer. FIFA 10 is even better. Buy it, become obsessed."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-20

9



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

"A spectacular game. Deeper and more technical, Fight Night Round 4 recreates the sweet science more faithfully than ever before. Remarkable detail, incredible animation."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-2

9



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

"With the 'vanilla' version's vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price, SSFIV belongs in everyone's collection."

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

10



UFC UNDISPUTED 2010

"The new undisputed baron of sports fighting, though its improvements aren't all that radical. But while it hasn't made leaps and bounds on last year's effort, it is a straight jab in the right direction."

DEVELOPER: Yuke's
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-2

8



VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

"More of a tweak than a brand new experience, Virtua Tennis 2009 is still the most enjoyable tennis game available today. Along with player creation tools, the biggest plus is the chance to play in the Davis Cup."

DEVELOPER: Sumo
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
PLAYERS: 1-4

8



GUITAR HERO METALLICA

"Guitar Hero Metallica improves upon GHWT in a number ways – a more user-friendly HUD, superior presentation and more attention to detail. Great tracklist too, including 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft
DISTRIBUTOR: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-4

8



DJ HERO

"A real surprise package, and tough to write off as a gimmick once you've played it. Utterly addictive, and great value when you consider it's chock full of great mixes you'll never hear anywhere else. An excellent game, and great for parties."

DEVELOPER: Freestyle Games
DISTRIBUTOR: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-2

9

MAGIC MOMENTS

THE GAME:

JUST CAUSE 2

CONSOLE: PlayStation 3 YEAR: 2010



THE MOMENT:

It's no secret we love Just Cause 2, a superb action title that focuses on, well, action. There aren't any pointless puzzles, levers to flip or sections where you're railroaded into doing things a certain way. It's the most sound definition of 'open-world game' we can think of: you're given free reign, the choice to completely ignore the story if you so wish and just go nuts with the tools at hand over the entire island.

Indeed, two of the most powerful and versatile tools we've seen, ever, are given to you at the start and they're presented in a quick, brash introduction.

You are right to think that leaping out of plane and learning how to work a parachute – in a literal crash course – is awesome though it gets better from there. Being inexhaustible just makes it so versatile. Same goes for the grappling hook and its ability to latch onto any solid surface. While the game's physics are a bit, er, loose they still led to some wild experiments; finding the fulcrum on a statue so you could bring it down with a crappy sedan was a joy.

The hook and 'chute are two great ingredients that, when brought together, make something more than their individual parts – like bacon and eggs. It is entirely possible to make your way from one corner of Panau to the other using this dynamic duo, but it's that moment when you figure out the sweet spot between altitude and speed to make the most ground as quickly as possible.

Forget about flying a chopper or a high-powered jet for the most satisfying aerial adventures. The mechanical joy of these two toys working in harmony as your sail over mountains, beaches and snowfields is yet to be bested – and we're looking forward to new challengers.



THE BEST PSone GAMES on PlayStation®Store

FINAL FANTASY VII
DEVELOPER: Square
PLAYERS: 1



The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, *Final Fantasy VII* is a modern classic and a worthy part of any credible videogame library.

DRIVER
DEVELOPER: Reflections Interactive (now Ubisoft Reflections)
PLAYERS: 1



The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic, powerslide-heavy car chases through 3D cities may be old hat now, but when *Driver* debuted it was the first of its kind. Essential.

CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED
DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog
PLAYERS: 1



Crash Bandicoot 3 remains the best pure platformer on a PlayStation console. The *Jak & Daxter* series is unmatched but, as far as old-school run 'n jump action in purpose-built levels goes, *this* is the zenith.

MEDIEVIL
DEVELOPER: SCE Studio Cambridge
PLAYERS: 1



It confounds us that the *MediEvil* series has been buried. It was brilliant. Fantasy hack 'n slash adventure with a sprinkling of the supernatural, *MediEvil* still does it better than many that have come since.

SYPHON FILTER
DEVELOPER: Eidetic (now Sony Bend)
PLAYERS: 1



Speaking of confounding, where the hell is *Syphon Filter*? We challenge you to play through the original again and tell us *Syphon Filter* doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback!

CRASH TEAM RACING
DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog
PLAYERS: 1-4



This is kart racing at its finest. *ModNation Racers* is a lot of things – but even *ModNation Racers* doesn't boast the simply brilliant range of tracks that *CTR* does. Must own.

QUICK LIST

3D Dot Game Heroes From Software

If you pine for the past this should keep you entertained.

2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa EA Canada

Blissful, *FIFA 10* football with a World Cup facelift. A bit pricey.

50 Cent: Blood on the Sand Swordfish Studios

So dumb it's dangerously good. Better than it sounds.

AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack Harmonix

Bare-bones stuff, but the music is worth it. Fully exportable.

RECOMMENDED Aliens vs. Predator: Rebellion Developments

Possibly the best movie-inspired title ever. Beyond brutal.

Alone in the Dark: Inferno Eden Studios

Post-*Dead Space* this just doesn't cut the mustard. At all.

Alpha Protocol Obsidian Entertainment

Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever.

Army of Two EA Montreal

Solid co-op thrills make up for its wasted potential.

Army of Two: The 40th Day EA Montreal

Still dumb, but a lot tighter and more fun than the first.

Ashes Cricket 2009 Transmission Games

Disappointing, but stick through the ugly for multiplayer beauty.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed Ubisoft Montreal

A landmark. Dated now, but was truly awe-inspiring at the time.

ESSENTIAL Assassin's Creed II Ubisoft Montreal

When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor.

Avatar Ubisoft Montreal

If you've got a 3D TV, buy it. If not, it's too derivative to bother.

Backbreaker NaturalMotion

Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in sports.

Baja: Edge of Control 2XL Games

A little bland, but brilliant handling and sound.

Band Hero Neversoft

Robust, but the over-zealous censorship grates a lot.

RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum

Rocksteady Studios

Really delivers the goods. Best Batman game ever.

Battle Fantasia Arc System Works

A nice curiosity, but seriously, get *Super Street Fighter IV*.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company

Digital Illusions CE

Destructible environments and humour. Together at last.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2

Digital Illusions CE

A top tier shooter, but the single-player mischief is M.I.A.

RECOMMENDED Bayonetta Platinum Games

It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band Harmonix

Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

Beijing 2008 Eurocom

Not the worst of its type, but far from a game to buy and keep.

Bionic Commando GRIN

There are some great moments, but they're few and far between.

ESSENTIAL BioShock Irrational Games / 2K Marin

14 months too late, but this is grown-up gaming at its best.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 2

2K Marin / Digital Extremes / 2K Australia

Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat is fantastic.

BlackSite: Area 51 Midway Studios Austin

A pedestrian shooter that needed more time in the lab.

BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Arc System Works

Wild, wackier and noisier than anything else on PS3.

Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII Ubisoft Romania

A simple aerial blaster. Flawed but fun.

Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII Ubisoft Romania

Solid, varied, but not quite the ace of aces.

Blur Bizarre Creations

A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

RECOMMENDED Borderlands Gearbox Software

A sprawling galactic adventure. An absolute ripper.

RECOMMENDED The Bourne Conspiracy High Moon Studios

Great presentation and vibe, samey action. Stylish, superficial.

RECOMMENDED Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway

Gearbox Software

The most authentic WWII shooter ever made.

RECOMMENDED Brutal Legend Double Fine Productions

Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us: Tim Schafer is God.

RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise Criterion Games

Stunning and sharp, but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

Call of Duty 3 Treyarch

Solid but surprisingly unspectacular. Seems rushed.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare Infinity Ward

Relentlessly exciting. You'd be insane or a girly man to miss it.

ESSENTIAL Modern Warfare 2 Infinity Ward

Categorically the best shooter of the decade.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: World at War Treyarch

A class act. War at its worst (and best). Plus, Nazi Zombies.

Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood Techland

A cinematic and action-packed Western shooter.

RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark

Athena Starbreeze Studios / Tigon Studios

Moody and fresh. A must play.

Civilization Revolution Firaxis Games

Not for everyone, but great fun and shockingly addictive.

Clash of the Titans Game Republic

A piss-poor action game lacking in every way.

The Club Bizarre Creations

Original, compulsive and fun.

RECOMMENDED Colin McRae: DIRT Codemasters

Plenty of real rally action, unlike its sequel.

Colin McRae: DIRT 2 Codemasters

Flashy and drives fine, but it's style over substance here.

Conan Nihilistic Software

A buldog of bloodletting, savage adventure and boobies.

RECOMMENDED Condemned 2: Bloodshot

Monolith Productions

Gripping stuff. We were blown away.

Conflict: Denied Ops Pivotal Games

A real surprise package, and tough to write off as a gimmick.

Cross Edge Compile Heart

Every benchmark of excellence has been missed. Offensive.

Damnation Blue Omega Entertainment

Uninspired level design, broken gameplay. Avoid.

RECOMMENDED Dante's Inferno Visceral Games

Derivative and simple, but well-produced and very playable.

Dark Sector Digital Extremes

Solid but hardly perfect.

Dark Void Airtight Games

Unimpressive graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.

RECOMMENDED The Darkness Starbreeze Studios

Stunning, original and gory as hell.

RECOMMENDED Darksiders Vigil Games

It'll test your patience but persevere and your satisfaction will swell.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space EA Redwood Shores

Super tense. The future of survival horror.

Dead to Rights: Retribution Volatile Games

Fine, but doesn't do enough to stand out. Needs more dog.

Def Jam: Icon EA Chicago

Pretty and highly kinetic. A bit cumbersome though.

Demon's Souls From Software

Those looking for an extreme challenge may have met their match.

Devil May Cry 4 Capcom

Memorable bosses, but too much backtracking spoils things.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero FreeStyleGames

A real surprise package, and tough to write off as a gimmick.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins BioWare

As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.

Eat Lead: The Return of Matt Hazard

Vicious Cycle Software

Great concept and nice parody, but basic one-play stuff.

ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion

Bethesda Game Studios

Simply put: awesome.

EyePet SCE London Studio

Harmless but pointless for adults; kids are the only ones for this.

FEAR Monolith Productions / Day 1 Studios

A chilling ride, but the graphics could've been sharper.

FEAR 2: Project Origin Monolith Productions

An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.

FaceBreaker EA Canada

Great look, but very unbalanced.

Fairytale Fights Playlogic Game Factory

Quirky and sadistic, but too simplistic for engaging solo play.

RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2 Ubisoft Montreal

A technical open-world bell-ringer, but the travel time will grate.

RECOMMENDED Fallout 3 Bethesda Game Studios

There's nothing else like it. A flawed masterpiece for the ages.

RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII Square Enix

Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action.

Folklore Game Republic

Original and surprising with moments of genius.

RECOMMENDED Formula One Championship Edition

SCE Studio Liverpool

Looks great, plays great. Good enough to last until *F1 2010*.

Fracture Day 1 Studios

Altering terrain is a neat twist, but overall it left us wanting.

Fuel Asobo Studios

Huge, but buggy, boring and undercooked.

Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds Pseudo Interactive

Fun but shallow. You'd take *Split/Second* instead these days.

Genji: Days of the Blade Game Republic

Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, piss-poor plodding gameplay.

RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters: The Video Game

Terminal Reality / Threewave Software

Robust, charming and impeccably presented. Fantastic fun.

The Godfather: The Don's Edition EA Redwood Shores

It made a good PS2 game, but skip this port.

The Godfather II EA Redwood Shores

Starts as a decent crime caper, but alienates fans of the film.

ESSENTIAL God of War III SCE Santa Monica Studio

A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking, astonishing visuals.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection

SCE Santa Monica Studio / Bluepoint Games

Age has not diminished its impact. Purchase immediately.

Golden Axe: Beast Rider Secret Level

Destined for the chopping block. No co-op? Boo!

Gran Turismo 5 Prologue Polyphony Digital

An appetising taster, but not the full course.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV Rockstar North

The technical scope and scale of *GTAIV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto: Episodes From Liberty City

Rockstar North

An essential, and often superior, companion to *GTAIV*.

RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band Harmonix

Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: RB* and *GH: Metallica*.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock Neversoft

The last *GH* with a mostly decent soundtrack.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero World Tour Neversoft

Good, but missing crucial elements that make *Rock Band* better.

Guitar Hero 5 Neversoft

Improving, but the tracklist is clearly half paid for by record suits.

Guitar Hero: Aerosmith Neversoft

Dated, and weak compared to the likes of *GH: Metallica*.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica Neversoft

The best *Guitar Hero* game since *Guitar Hero III*.

Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits Beenox

Great past *GH* tracks with full band support. Why wasn't it DLC?

Guitar Hero: Van Halen Underground Development

Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA *GH5* buyers got it free.

Hail to the Chimp Wideowl Games

Not funny, or enjoyable. Want to lose friends? Play this with them.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

EA Bright Light Studio

Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix EA UK

The chore-like structure will probably bore most.

Haze Free Radical Design

A flop. Patchy visuals, apostate level design and dismal AI.

RECOMMENDED Heavenly Sword Ninja Theory

Slick graphics and refined combat. A bit short though.

RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain Quantic Dream

Not quite a revolution, but clever and well-crafted.

Helloby: The Science of Evil Krome Studios

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust Team17 Software 1
An amazing new low for this generation. Worst game ever? Maybe.

ESSENTIAL LittleBigPlanet Media Molecule 10
Innovative and never-ending. It's time to hit the sack!

The Lord of the Rings: Conquest Pandemic Studios 5
It may offer spurts of fun, but it's mediocre in every way.

Lost Planet: Extreme Condition Capcom / K2 LLC 6
A half-arsed port you'd never bother with at this point.

Lost Planet 2 Capcom 7
Slim pickings for solo players but multiplayer buffs may dig it.

Lost: Via Domus Ubisoft Montreal 6
Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

RECOMMENDED MAG Zipper Interactive 9
Zombie junkies take heed, this is where it's at for online combat.

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance Raven Software 9
Colourful, action-packed, co-op dungeon crawling.

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2 Vicarious Visions 7
A compelling romp, but the button-mashing play needs updating.

Medal of Honor: Airborne EA Los Angeles 6
Short and lacks much true innovation. Too many problems.

RECOMMENDED Mercenaries 2: World in Flames Pandemic Studios 8
Weak in many areas, but has fun in spades.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots Kojima Productions 10
Insane productions values. A titan amongst games.

RECOMMENDED Midnight Club: Los Angeles Rockstar San Diego 7
Visually weak at times. Great customisation and seamless racing.

RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge EA Digital Illusions CE 8
A true original that makes some grand leaps in design.

Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight Namco Bandai Games 3
A rubber Godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers United Front Games 9
An incredible package. Creating is even more fun than racing!

Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe Midway Games 7
A fun game with mass appeal, but not very technical.

MotoGP 09/10 Monumental Games 6
Simulation freaks will want to veer well away.

RECOMMENDED MotorStorm Evolution Studios 10
Fast, hard and dirty. In 2007, it was everything game should be.

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift Evolution Studios 8
Boasts split-screen, but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

MX vs. ATV: Untamed Rainbow Studios 6
Feels like a PS2 port with no next gen goodness.

MX vs. ATV Reflex Rainbow Studios 7
Motocross freaks will love it. Needed a little more zest though.

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K10 Visual Concepts / Kush Games 8
Excellent, broadcast-level presentation. The FIFA 10 of basketball.

NBA Live 10 EA Canada 8
Nearly as good as NBA 2K10, but you don't need them both.

NBA Street: Homecourt EA Canada 8
Brash, addictive arcade basketball. Instant fun.

Need for Speed: Carbon EA Black Box 8
A bit more Paul Walker than Vin Diesel, but solid.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed: SHIFT Slightly Mad Studios 9
Superbly presented and a blast to play. Feels fast.

Need for Speed: Undercover EA Black Box 5
Technically faulty, and adds nothing good since *Most Wanted*.

Nier Cavia Unreleased 7
Decent enough, but there are richer experiences elsewhere.

RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma Team Ninja 8
A treasure trove of gaming goodness. And violence.

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 Team Ninja 8
A sexy and rock hard title, but the gore's been cut.

Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising Codemasters 8
Authentic but niche. Very unforgiving.

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box EA UK / Valve Corporation 9
Portal is worth virtually any asking price alone.

Overlord: Raising Hell 4J Studios / Triumph Studios 7
A bundle of fun, mixing tactics with a juvenile love of chaos.

Overlord II Triumph Studios 8
Refined gameplay and more jokes, but control quirks persist.

RECOMMENDED PES 2010: Pro Evolution Soccer Konami 8
Improvements are welcomed, but still not as classy as FIFA 10.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End Eurocom 6
Looks the part, but doesn't feel or play the part.

Planet 51 Pyro Studios 5
Like a dry cracker for dinner. Bland and boring, and no fun.

RECOMMENDED Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands Ubisoft Montreal 8
Worth your time, but better swordplay could've really helped.

Prison Break Zootfly 4
A below-average stealth game cobbled together on the cheap.

RECOMMENDED Prototype Radical Entertainment 8
A simple superhero kill-fest, but a truckload of guilty fun.

RECOMMENDED Pure Black Rock Studios 9
Still one of the best arcade racers on the market.

Quantum of Solace Treyarch 7
Nearly there, but has a few too many faults to get over the line.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID Codemasters 9
A born-to-rage racing rebel. Good, but lacks *Race Driver* vintage.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time Insomniac Games 9
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction Insomniac Games 8
A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.

ESSENTIAL Red Dead Redemption Rockstar San Diego 10
This Western is bigger, badder and more violent than *GTAIV*.

ESSENTIAL Red Faction: Guerrilla Volition, Inc. 9
Huge fun, and the best destruction effects ever.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5 Capcom 9
A grand, bloody adventure, but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED Resistance: Fall of Man Insomniac Games 10
A truly fantastic launch title with the best weapons around.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 2 Insomniac Games 9
Fast and furious, and stuffed with action.

Resonance of Fate tri-Ace 6
Deep, but also wordy, clunky and ugly.

Ridge Racer 7 Namco 9
Unadulterated arcade racing at its peak. We've moved on though.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band Harmonix 10
The best party game ever, until *Rock Band 2*.

ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2 Harmonix 10
The best music game around, despite MTV's poor treatment of us.

Rogue Warrior Zombie Studios / Rebellion Developments 3
A fiasco. We tried to like it, but it's too short and too terrible.

RECOMMENDED The Saboteur Pandemic Studios 8
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel Ascaron Entertainment 6
Gigantic, but feels very slapped together.

RECOMMENDED Saints Row 2 Volition, Inc. 9
Puerile, mean-spirited and technically outclassed, if you care.

SBK-X: Superbike World Championship Milestone 7
Inches in front of *MotoGP 09/10*. Purists may still hate on it.

Scene It? Bright Lights! Big Screen! A2M 5
Woefully vanilla compared to the past Xbox 360 versions.

Sega Rally Sega Racing Studio 7
Familiar, old-school arcade fun.

Shaun White Snowboarding Ubisoft Montreal 6
Sheds the fine touch of realism or the excitement of lunacy.

Silent Hill Homecoming Double Helix Games 6
New combat system is good, but lacks the cerebral chills.

The Simpsons Game EA Redwood Shores 8
Short, but the cromulent visuals embiggen the experience.

RECOMMENDED SingStar SCE London Studio 8
Will last as long as the PS3. Have you seen the DLC?

RECOMMENDED Skate EA Black Box 9
A well-balanced masterpiece and true Tony Hawk killer.

ESSENTIAL Skate 2 EA Black Box 9
Perfect controls, plus New San Van is the best *Skate* city yet.

RECOMMENDED Skate 3 EA Black Box 9
Better in many ways, although the city isn't as cool as *Skate 2*.

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Confrontation Slant Six Games 6
A sturdy, dependable effort that fails to excite.

Soldier of Fortune: Payback Cauldron HQ 6
Serviceable we guess, but the gore has been cut out for us.

Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing Sumo Digital 7
Fun but shallow. Copies from the best but missing crucial spark.

Sonic the Hedgehog Sonic Team 4
There are cheaper ways to get a spare Blu-ray case.

Sonic Unleashed Sonic Team 6
It's the least awful Sonic game in years, if that means anything.

RECOMMENDED Soulcalibur IV Namco Bandai 9
Phenomenal, but will let down those expecting a revolution.

Spider-Man: Web of Shadows Treyarch / Shaba Games 7
Swift and tidy, but not exactly deep.

RECOMMENDED Split/Second Black Rock Studio 8
Doesn't feel as sharp as *Burnout*, but it's a true challenger.

Star Ocean: The Last Hope International tri-Ace 7
Feels like a cutesy, angst-ridden version of *Star Trek*.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed LucasArts 7
Plays a good game but fails to use its idea to maximum effect.

Stormrise The Creative Assembly 4
A cack-handed, future war mess. Terrible controls.

RECOMMENDED Street Fighter IV Capcom / Dimps 10
A tight-fisted gut blow of wow, but get *Super Street Fighter IV*.

RECOMMENDED Stuntman: Ignition Paradigm Entertainment 9
The vehicular equivalent of a 10-hour long orgasm.

ESSENTIAL Super Street Fighter IV Capcom / Dimps 10
Features a lion's share of new content for its price. Get it.

SuperCar Challenge Eutechnyx 7
Admirable effort, but feels a little bland despite the exotic cars.

Superstars V8: Next Challenge Milestone 7
An improvement, but it's still more shallow than it thinks it is.

RECOMMENDED Tekken 6 Namco Bandai 8
Easy to play, with the biggest roster ever. Feels a bit old, though.

Terminator Salvation GRIN / Halcyon Games 4
An abysmal failure. Short, and filled with glitches.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09 EA Tiburon 8
Still the only golf game worth owning.

Time Crisis 4 Nex Entertainment 7
A little bipolar at times. Stick with arcade mode and enjoy.

TimeShift Saber Interactive 6
A solid attempt that doesn't quite reach 88 miles per hour.

TNA Impact! Midway Studios - Los Angeles 6
Good, arcade-style biff, but there's not enough content.

Tom Clancy's EndWar Ubisoft Shanghai 7
The console RTS is here, but it's far from a finished product.

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 Red Storm Entertainment 8
A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. Ubisoft Romania 7
Tight and accessible, but a bit sterile.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas Ubisoft Montreal 9
Slick, good-looking and utterly engaging. Smart shooting.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 Ubisoft Montreal 7
Doesn't quite feel as cool as the first one.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent Ubisoft Shanghai 9
Obsessive and gripping, online and off. Obtain.

Tony Hawk's Project 8 Neversoft 7
No real reason to revisit this post-Skate at all.

Tony Hawk's Proving Ground Neversoft 6
Bloated and inconsistent. Pass.

Tony Hawk: RIDE Robomodo 4
Pure frustration made plastic. Sub-par game, ludicrous price.

Top Spin 3 PAM Development 8
Realistic tennis with a steep learning curve.

Toy Story 3 Avalanche Software 7
Cute, simple, and charming as hell. Way better than you think.

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen Luxoflux 6
A day of undermanning fun, but not much more.

Turning Point: Fall of Liberty Spark Unlimited 4
Sheisse from start to finish. Great concept, bogus execution.

Turok Propaganda Games 7
The new *Turok* packs bite but it's missing a few teeth.

UFC 2009 Undisputed Yuke's 8
A technical, rewarding fighter that looks bloody unreal.

RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 2010 Yuke's 8
The new undisputed brand of sports fighting.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted: Drake's Fortune Naughty Dog 10
Awesome plot, awesome graphics, awesome action. This owns.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves Naughty Dog 10
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.

Unreal Tournament 3 Epic Games 8
Fast, twitchy online multiplayer shooting. No split-screen though.

Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom Sony Online Entertainment 5
Bland hack 'n' slash. No ballads will be sung of this adventure.

Valkyria Chronicles Sega WOW 8
Strategy and RPG heads alike should not miss this game.

Vancouver 2010 Eurocom 6
A handful of events that last one afternoon. Skip it.

Viking: Battle for Asgard The Creative Assembly 7
Slow attacks and weak visuals, but it has its appeal.

RECOMMENDED Virtua Fighter 5 Sega-AM2 8
As hardcore as fighting games get. Deep and balanced.

Virtua Tennis 3 Sega-AM3 8
The best fun four people could have, until *Rock Band*.

RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 2009 Sumo Digital 8
The top seed of tennis games made even better.

Wanted: Weapons of Fate GRIN 5
Designed only to appeal to mentally-subnormal 11-year-olds.

RECOMMENDED Warhawk Incognito Entertainment / SCE Santa Monica Studio 9
Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night.

WET A2M 8
With so much style, who needs substance? Grindhouse fare.

Wheelman Midway Studios - Newcastle / Tigon Studios 6
Rubbish low-speed handling, and underdone throughout.

White Knight Chronicles Level-5 / SCE Japan Studio 6
Doesn't feel like a worthwhile way to spend 30-or-so hours.

Wolfenstein Raven Software / id Software 7
Lacks soul but still delivers Nazi-blasting action.

WWE Legends of WrestleMania Yuke's 6
Gets by on retro charm, but feels ancient.

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010 Yuke's 8
If WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana.

X-Men Origins: Wolverine Raven Software 7
A head slash 'n' chest beater of a slash 'em up. Repetitive though.

Yakuza 3 Amusement Vision 7
Certainly an acquired taste. Lots to do, but the slow pace grates.

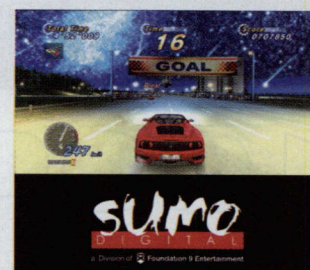
INHOUSE

FEATURED STUDIO:

SUMO DIGITAL

LOCATION: SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND

FOUNDED: 2003



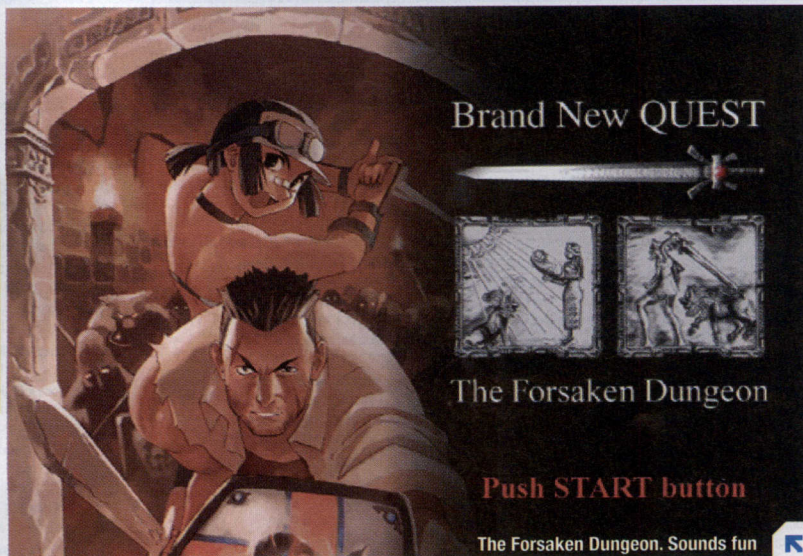
"It all began with *OutRun 2*", says Sumo Digital's 'Design Evangelist', Sean Millard, of Sega's ongoing interest. "Our passion for the most 'Beautiful Journey' in video games was obvious, the development process was a success and, as with all our publishing partners, they came back for more and the relationship grew from strength to strength on the back of trust, transparent business practices, creative implementation, attention to detail and reliable delivery."

Like many other game studios, Sumo Digital's roots are deep and winding like an old oak tree. Key staff members are from the now defunct Gremlin Interactive, who itself was bought by Infogrames, that in turn changed its name to Atari. Gremlin was responsible for a lot of original games on the PSone - and prior to that as well on the Commodore 64 - most notably the *Actua Series* sports games. One of their biggest hits, however, was the soccer management sim *Premier Manager*, which thrived on the Amiga 500 and Sega Mega Drive. This is all old tech and some staff members have been working together for the last 20 years.

So it's fair to say they know what they're doing to keep the work rolling in during a global financial crisis, and also to make entertaining games. Though they've produced original title for the PS3 - *Go! Sudoku* and *Super Rub a Dub* - their demonstrated strength for this generation lies in creating extra content for established franchises.

Creating new IP may be glamorous but it's damn risky. It also takes talent and guts to tinker with an existing title; not only to make it worthwhile for gamers to play, but satisfying the IP holders who have to be sure that their games have been treated with respect.





1998 EHRGEIZ: GOD BLESS THE RING

The fighting game that nobody knew how to pronounce returns to the blessed ring

Even though it sports a subtitle that sounds like a party activity suggested by a soon-to-be-ex-Catholic priest, *Ehrgeiz: God Bless the Ring* actually happens to be a rare gem of a fighter.

It's rareness can be attributed to it not quite making the Greatest Hits list and going platinum – and thus not ever being re-released. It's gem-like qualities revolve around the fact that its stable of playable fighters includes some be-gelled characters from *Final Fantasy VII*. Namely, Cloud Strife, Tifa Lockhart, Sephiroth, Yuffie Kisaragi, Vincent Valentine and Zack Fair. Yes, you read that roster right – and yes, that feeling you're currently experiencing is the early stages of a nerdgasm.

Directed and created by *Virtua Fighter* and *Tekken* designer Seichi Ishii, *Ehrgeiz* differed from most 3D fighting games at the time by drawing heavily from the concepts of ring based wrestling games. Developer DreamFactory had previously tried the full 360-degree movement in the PSX title *Tobal No.1* with great results. In comparative terms, *Ehrgeiz* is an early precursor to games like *Powerstone*, relying on a fixed, zoom-able camera and multi-levelled arenas filled with interactive objects.

Admittedly, the one on one fighting in *Ehrgeiz* is good but not great – if they had four-player multi-tap support it would have been phenomenal. The feature that makes it stand out from the crowd is the Quest mode. Essentially the mode is a surprisingly deep hack 'n'slash action RPG that features

randomly generated dungeons to explore, each of them featuring equipable loot, ever-stronger weapons, and some predictably kooky English narrative.

As if a fully-fledged RPG mode wasn't enough to fill out 700MBs of PSX disc, Dream Factory also included a robust two-player versus mode and you could test your speed, skill, and dexterity in four unique mini-games. At your already blistered fingertips is Infinity Battle (survival mode), Battle Runner (two player racing – with violence), Battle Beach (button mashing *Track and Field* style events), and Panel Battle (think: a two-player Othello board with punching).

As feature packed as this game is, we'd be remiss if we didn't warn you about *Ehrgeiz*'s more glaring faults. For reasons unknown to commonsense the control scheme requires you to leave the joystick neutral in order to block high, while pressing 'block' makes you crouch and guard low. It takes time to get your head around, but once it clicks in you have a fighting game that, like *Powerstone*, encourages aggression or evasion while punishing the puny folks who turtle-up at the very first sign of trouble.

If you have some spare cash lying around and you want a collectible piece of PSX fighting game history (that leans closer to a brawling than it does a chess match with violence), *Ehrgeiz* is well worth a look. And, hey – at a paltry 15 bucks even the most tight-arsed gamer could have their ring blessed without feeling too much irritation at all.

Adam Mathew



INFO

CONSOLE:
PLAYSTATION
GENRE:
FIGHTING/ RPG
DEVELOPER:
DREAMFACTORY
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
JAPAN
CURRENT
APPROXIMATE
PRICE: \$15 (EBAY)



THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

The playable characters are an odd bunch. Ken 'Godhand' Mishima has a gun barrel prosthetic right arm and rips off some moves from *Tekken* fighters Jin and Kazuya. Han Daehan does Tae Kwon Do and his right leg has a rocket launcher in the kneecap (no, seriously). Yoko Kishibojin is a female cop obsessed with yoyos. Lee Shuwen is a kempo exponent who can kill with one hit. Jo is a handcuff-fighting "Man-eating wolf girl". Clair Andrews is the typical school girl who wears a skirt the size of most belts. Japan, man. They make their own rules.



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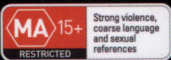
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